THE

SPIRITUAL WORKS

OF THE

Rev. John Gother.

IN SIXTEEN VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

NEWCASTLE:

PRINTED FOR AND SOLD BY F. COATES; MESS. KEATING, COGHLAN, AND BOOKER, IN LONDON; WOGAN AND CROSS, DUBLIN.

INSTRUCTIONS

ON THE

EPISTLES AND GOSPELS

OF THE

SUNDAYS,

FROM TRINITY-SUNDAY TO ADVENT.

INSTRUCTIONS
FOR
SUNDAYS.

TRINITY-SUNDAY.

First after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. xi. 32. To the end.

HOW *unſpeakable are the ways of God?* Having now, in the ſolemnity of *Whitſuntide*, compleated all the feſtivals belonging to man's redemption, and the eſtabliſhment of the church of Chriſt, we are this day called to celebrate, with all poſſible reverence, the moſt adorable myſtery of

the bleſſed Trinity; to acknowledge with gratitude all that has been done in our behalf, to have been the mercy and work of the moſt holy Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghoſt, bleſſed for evermore. And though in regard of all that has been wrought for our redemption, as likewiſe of this day's myſtery, we may juſtly cry out; O the depth of the treaſures of God's wiſdom and knowledge! How incomprehenſible are his judgments; how unſearchable his ways! Yet thus confeſſing his infinite greatneſs and our nothing, may we ſtill bleſs and adore, what we cannot ſearch into or comprehend: For light and darkneſs too are equally to bleſs our Lord: And the cherubins bowing down with their faces veiled with their wings, ſhew us what we are to do, whilſt that infinite majeſty which removes God from our knowledge, may help to draw us nearer to him by our more profound humility and adoration. Thus our God being light inacceſſible, and we nothing but darkneſs, yet does not this our darkneſs hinder us from approaching to him, as in praiſe, adoration, thankſgiving, ſo likewiſe in faith. And I cannot but think this myſtery is deſignedly propoſed to us at this time, when having ſeen a church eſtabliſhed in the apoſtles, by the viſible deſcent of the Holy

Ghoſt, commiſſioned to teach all nations, and with an obligation on all nations, to believe her under pain of damnation, we are by this firſt ſtep into Chriſtianity, in the belief of this myſtery, taught to receive the other doctrines ſhe delivers to us, notwithſtanding the darkneſs that may be on our ſide, and that we cannot comprehend them. For as I believe in God, and adore him in all the hidden ways of his providence, though to me they are all incomprehenſible; ſo I think myſelf obliged to ſubmit, with as ready a faith, to whatever doctrines belong to him, however, through my weakneſs, they are to me unſearchable; and it is only by this way I can become a true member of the faithful.

For faith is a virtue which does not directly look into the reaſonableneſs of the thing delivered, by examining how ſuitable it is in itſelf to human reaſon, but into the truth and ſecurity of the deliverer; and being once evidently convinced of this, it readily receives it, with a greater confidence of its being truth, from that light accompanying it from the deliverer, than if it had the light of human reaſon to give ſome evidence of the thing, as conſidered in itſelf. Hence the true Chriſtian, in his faith of things divine, ever follows the ſteps of

Abraham, who was the father of the faithful, who, as St *Paul* ſays, *Rom.* iv. 18. *Contra ſpem in ſpem credidit: Againſt hope, believed in hope:* That is, as there expounded, *was not weak in faith, upon the conſideration of his own body now dead, when he was about an hundred years old; neither yet the deadneſs of* Sarah's *womb:* Notwithſtanding all this darkneſs of the thing promiſed in itſelf: *He ſtaggered not at the promiſe of God, through unbelief; but was ſtrong in faith, giving glory to God; being fully perſuaded, that what he had promiſed, he was able to perform.* Thus the true Chriſtian proceeds, as to every thing belonging to faith: He only enquires into this one point, that is, *Whether the authority that delivers it be divine, and carries the ſecurity of God along with it*; and being evidently convinced of this, he aſſents to the points delivered, as to moſt certain and infallible truths, though private reaſon, at the ſame time, affords no light to recommend them, as conſidered in themſelves. By this method, his faith is ever ready and lively in regard of points, that are moſt difficult; it is peaceable and ſteady in the midſt of ſeeming contradictions; it is obedient, even as to be ready to ſacrifice all; it is perſevering in the greateſt trials; it is conſtant and faithful in the midſt of a

general infidelity: Such was the fulneſs of *Abraham*'s faith, and ſuch the Chriſtian's faith ought to be, ſince being built on no other foundation than the truth of God himſelf, it is much ſuperior to all human fears, fancies, or reaſoning; and therefore admitting no juſt doubts, can no ways ſtagger through unbelief.

This is the method and ground of his faith; and thus, as he receives a truth delivered by human authority with a human faith; ſo whatever is delivered by a divine authority, he receives with a faith divine. And where this authority is not evident, his aſſent to whatever it delivers, is accompanied with doubts and fears, and conſequently is not true faith, much leſs divine. In this manner he believes in general whatever is taught in the holy ſcriptures, with a divine faith, becauſe he has an evidence of their having been written by the ſpirit of God: But when he comes to the particular points there contained; then his faith is ever proportioned to that authority, which expounds them to him: So that when he expounds them by his own private judgment, and ſeems inclined to adhere to ſuch an interpretation, as to the real truth of God's word; upon reflection, conſidering he has no other authority for this interpretation,

but only the agreeableneſs it has to his own judgment, he cannot therefore embrace it with a divine faith; becauſe, though the ſcripture itſelf be recommended by divine authority; yet this interpretation ſtands only on the authority of his own judgment, which is only human, and conſequently, if no greater aſſent be given to it than is juſtly its due, it muſt neceſſarily be accompanied with doubts and fears, and is ſubject to alteration, upon any other ſenſe of the ſame place of ſcripture, at any other time that may appear more reaſonable to him; which uncertainty is inconſiſtent with true and divine faith: And if he takes a ſtep farther, and having conſulted ſome learned and pious divine, aſſents to it in the ſenſe as thus delivered by him: And afterwards conſidering there is no other authority for this, than the ſincerity and learning of this interpreter, he finds this comes very much ſhort of divine faith, and muſt unavoidably be followed with doubts, upon the hearing any other of equal learning and piety, giving a contrary ſenſe of holy writ. And thus, wherever he turns, he is ſtill at a loſs, till he finds an interpreter authoriſed by God himſelf, whom he has ſolemnly promiſed to guide and aſſiſt by his holy Spirit, for the teaching the truth: And having happily

met with this, he hears and believes with a divine faith; becauſe, as the ſcripture itſelf, ſo its interpretation too is here delivered with the authority of God, and therefore is not a human, but a divine truth, wholly free from doubts and fears, and not queſtionable upon any difficulties moved by any human learning whatever; and becauſe, upon a diligent enquiry, he can find no ſuch authority thus commiſſioned by Chriſt, and ſecured by his ſpirit, for teaching the truth of the ſcriptures, excepting only the Catholic church; therefore in her only can he reſt; and while ſhe teaches, he hears and believes, depending for the truth of every point, on the *ſolemn promiſe of Chriſt, and the aſſiſtance of his ſpirit*; for though heaven and earth paſs away, yet his word will never paſs away. Whatever difficulty therefore may appear in the doctrines delivered, this is no weakening to his faith, as long as in the deliverer there is manifeſt a divine authority.

TRINITY SUNDAY.

First after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke vi. 36. Ends verſe 42.

BE *you merciful, as your Father is merciful.* Man in this ſtate of redemption is the work of God's mercy; and the Chriſtian ought to bear his image in the imitation of this divine perfection. God is full of mercy towards us, and it is our duty to be full of mercy towards our brethren, for the love of God; ſo to expreſs the gratitude we owe him.

Such as deſire to ſatisfy this duty, will find in this Goſpel four ways, in which they are directed, for the exerciſe of this mercy. The firſt is that of not judging others; and this God has made ſo much their intereſt, that he declares, this mercy in not judging others ſhall be the rule of the divine mercy towards them; that if they judge not, they ſhall not be judged. Not that God condemns here juſt judgments,

but only ſuch as are raſh and unjuſt; for there being nothing of injuſtice in judging according to truth, which is evident, that is not forbidden; but there being always injuſtice or raſhneſs, in paſſing a judgment without certainty, or evidence of truth, it is not according to the rule of the divine mercy, and therefore the practice cannot be, without drawing the ſeverity of God's judgments on their own heads. This then is to be avoided; and for more exactneſs we may here frame ſome rules, ſuch as obſervation will teach us, from what others do in regard of ourſelves, which ever meeting with our reſentments, may ſerve to direct us, in regard of our neighbour. See then ſome of theſe rules.

Firſt, It is unreaſonable and unjuſt to fix on any perſon an injurious name, ſuch as ſignifies a habit in vice, for ſome paſſing fault he has committed. A man is not imprudent for one indiſcretion; but often more prudent, from the experience of ſuch an overſight.

Secondly, When there are ſeveral motives upon which an action may be done, it is unjuſt to charge it upon the worſt: As to lay that of hatred or paſſion, which may have been done by inadvertency, perſuaſion, or conſcience.

Thirdly, It is unjuſt to charge all like actions on the ſame intention, when they may have different, for ſome may be done upon deſign, and others without reflection.

Fourthly, It is unjuſt to ſupply by our own imagination, what we do not ſee in an action, of which we undertake to judge; that is, to judge beyond what we ſee; for though it be not forbidden to ſee, yet it is forbidden to judge farther than we ſee; becauſe this is judging without evidence, which is always unreaſonable.

Fifthly, It is unjuſt to ſuppoſe a fault as incorrigible, when there has not been due care uſed for remedying it.

Sixthly, It is unjuſt to fix or ſuppoſe a fault in any, upon the report of perſons, whoſe credit is not ſufficient for grounding ſuch a judgment; as all thoſe are, who are over-credulous, inſincere, melancholy, light, or ſubject to paſſion.

Seventhly, It is unjuſt to give always the preference to ſuch perſons who are moſt in our favour, and to let the inclination they have towards us be the rule both of our eſteem and judgment: So as to repute their faults inconſiderable who love us, and all theirs inſupportable whom we ſuppoſe diſaffected towards us.

Theſe maxims may give ſome light in

this affair, for preventing our being injurious to our neighbour, and much more ſo to our own ſouls, by provoking heavier judgments upon ourſelves. This is motive enough; though others ſtill will be diſcovered by thoſe who obſerve that raſh judgments are the ordinary cauſe of averſion, hatred, detraction, and infinite other ill effects. The greateſt diſſenſions proceed often from no other root, whilſt thus influenced, both words and actions betray interior prejudices, and open a breach. And if once they are made public, how do they multiply; there being but very few who will take the pains to examine into the truth of what they hear? The generality of the world is eaſy in reporting from thoſe who have judged raſhly of their neighbour, becauſe in this they gratify their own natural corruption, and juſtify at the ſame time the evil they do; becauſe the judgment is not their own, but framed by another; not reflecting, that if another is to be accountable for framing it, they are to anſwer for believing and reporting it.

The ſecond way of practiſing this mercy is, in not condemning others; and the promiſe annexed is ſufficient encouragement: *Condemn not, and thou ſhalt not be condemned.* The thing required is not to condemn with

rigour thoſe faults in others which are certain and viſible, nor to exaggerate or publiſh them; but rather to diminiſh, hide, and excuſe them, as far as may be, without prejudice to truth and juſtice. All are ſenſible of their own infirmities, of the powerful aſſaults made againſt them, and all ſhould know how great is their misfortune who are overcome; theſe are ſo many heads, upon which compaſſion is due to ſuch as are in ſin; and who is he that thinks he ſtands, that has not reaſon to fear his own fall; and to ſee in others his own caſe, were it not a mercy undue to him that is his ſupport? It is a cruelty then to exaggerate their misfortunes, who are already too miſerable; and is it not the blindneſs even of deſpair for Chriſtians to expoſe themſelves to the rigour of divine vengeance, rather than have an indulgent tenderneſs for their brethren under ſin?

The third way is in pardoning injuries done againſt them: *Forgive, and you ſhall be forgiven.* Encouragement enough, in having this mercy made ſo much our own intereſt. And what is it that man has to forgive, in compariſon of thoſe ſins which he himſelf has committed againſt God? Our greateſt complaints have often more of our own imaginations than reality in them; they are

many times the effects of indiſcretion, rather than of malice; and if they are real evils, can we ſay we have not brought them upon ourſelves by our own ſins, whilſt God makes others the inſtruments of his juſtice? Can we ſay ſuch perſons are more injurious to us than we are to ourſelves, ſince the miſchief from their hands is nothing, if compared to that we do our own ſouls, by uncharitable reſentments, by paſſion and revenge? And yet if, upon forgiving theſe, we have an aſſurance of being forgiven by God as to all our paſt crimes, and the eternal puniſhment that is due, can we ſay we have faith? Can we ſay we have reaſon, if we do not accept of this compendious way of clearing the immenſe debts under which we lie?

The fourth way is that of giving: *Give, and it ſhall be given to you.* Chriſtians are to give or lend to their neighbour in his wants; and is it not encouragement enough to this charity, that truth itſelf offers to be ſecurity for the payment of what is thus given? But then, it muſt not be for vanity, human generoſity, or intereſt; but God muſt be the motive of what is given, if it be expected that he ſhall take it in account. And is it not here the effect of infinite goodneſs, that what God could have commanded from us upon the title of his ſovereign

power over our perſons and goods, he is pleaſed to invite us to do upon the hopes of recompence? But ſince he has promiſed it, it is not covetouſneſs, but piety, to hope and wait for what he ſtands engaged. And who are they now that have any ſenſe of their own wants, both temporal and ſpiritual, and how neceſſary a dependence there is for the relief of theſe on the hand of God, that will not readily accept of theſe obvious and eaſy means for opening God's hands upon them?

O God, we muſt here confeſs it an effect of thy infinite mercy, that thou haſt thus ſtrictly joined our duty and our intereſt, and put our eternal lot into our own hands; ſo that what we moſt dread, and what we ought moſt to hope for, is now left to our own management. And are not the terms very eaſy, when by not judging others we may eſcape thy judgment, when by ſhewing mercy to others we may find mercy, when by forgiving others we may be forgiven, and by helping others we may obtain thy help? It is thy mercy, O God, to make our ſalvation thus eaſy to us; what then muſt our ſin and blindneſs be, if we accept not the conditions thou haſt offered?

Corpus-Chriſti Day.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* xi. 23. Ends verſe 29.

TAKE *and eat, this is my body.* The day of the inſtitution of this divine banquet having been in great part taken up with devotions then juſtly due to the ſacred paſſion of our Lord; therefore is this day ſet apart with an octave, wherein the faithful may wholly apply themſelves to conſider all the wonders of this great myſtery, and adore the goodneſs of their Redeemer in preparing them this table of mercy. For it is truly a table of mercy, whence our Lord not only feeds our ſouls with his body and blood, thus to nouriſh and ſtrengthen us in a ſpiritual life; but likewiſe feeds our minds, our thoughts, and hearts, with all thoſe ſacred inſtructions neceſſary to overcome the world, and conduct us to a ſeat of glory. —1. In leaving us this great myſtery, under the veils of bread and wine, ſo that in appearance it ſeems but mean and inconſiderable; he exerciſes the faith of the humble

Chriſtians, and confounds the pride of the great ones; teaching us, that true Chriſtian virtue deſires not any pomp or ſhew, in drawing the eyes of the world, by diſcourſe or reputation, but rather to lie hid; becauſe, though to appear ſo far as may be neceſſary to inſtruct others may be charity; yet to appear with the hopes of being admired, is vanity and ſelf-love. And if this be to be avoided at all times, certainly it muſt be moſt deteſtable in the church; firſt in thoſe that preach Chriſt and his Goſpel, in thoſe that officiate at the altar, in thoſe that pretend to a religious life, in all thoſe that approach to the communion, or aſſiſt at the ſacrifice of the *Maſs*. For whilſt men undertake to propagate the Goſpel of Chriſt, and ſerve at his altar, ought it not to be done with the Spirit of Chriſt? Whilſt they come to *receive* him, or *offer* him to the eternal Father; can this be done with any ſpiritual advantage to them, who, in their very manner of doing it, make war againſt him, and ſet up for vanity, which is the thing he deſires to baniſh from all Chriſtian duties? Therefore, as for thoſe paſtors, who, in any of their functions, ſeek themſelves; and for thoſe of the faithful, who come to their public duties in ſuch a light, vain, and worldly manner, as to draw eyes and admi-

ration upon themſelves, it is plain they walk not in the ſteps of their maſter; who in the church hiding his divinity, cannot be pleaſed with thoſe who there expoſe their vanities: And they muſt not wonder at the little improvements they find from their beſt devotions, who, in the place conſecrated to God's honour, come to ſeek their own; and where idolatry is moſt abominable, ſo far promote it as they deſire to be admired; ſince ſo far they withdraw the hearts of the faithful from God on themſelves.

2. Chriſt being in the *Euchariſt* as it were in a ſtate of death, where his body and blood are conſecrated and offered, as myſtically ſeparated from each other; hence not only thoſe that offer, but likewiſe all that receive this holy food, are obliged, as St. *Paul* directs, to ſhew forth the death of our Lord; taking it in remembrance of his death, and there learning to die with him; ſo as to be ever ready to ſurrender their lives to him, whenever he ſhall pleaſe to demand them: And not only ſo, but as he lived and died a ſacrifice for us; ſo we, both living and dying, may endeavour to offer a continual ſacrifice to him: Sacrifice our bodies by daily penance and mortification, and the practice of ſelf-denial in as many particulars as may ſerve to bring us

to an entire ſubjection to his bleſſed will: Sacrifice our ſouls by adoration, thankſgiving, love, and prayer: Sacrifice our time, by employing it, not in ſeeking ourſelves, but in the conſtant diſcharge of our duties, and as it may be for his honour: Sacrifice our worldly goods, not by abuſing them in the ſupport of our curioſity, vanity, our liberties, and vice; but like faithful ſtewards, ſo expending what he has entruſted in our hands, as we may be able to ſet all to his account. This is a leſſon he preaches to us, as often as we appear in preſence of this holy myſtery; ever requiring us to render ſacrifice for ſacrifice: And if to this we could bring our lives, no queſtion but our deaths would be ſo too.

3. Chriſt in the *Euchariſt* being the victim offered for the deſtruction of ſin, teaches us daily, in the remembrance of his ſufferings, how faithfully we ought to join with him in our moſt laborious endeavours for the ſame end. Hence all thoſe true penitents, and other well-meaning ſouls, who heartily make war againſt ſin, and ſincerely deſire to correct in themſelves whatever they perceive there diſpleaſing to God, may, with great confidence, not only appear before him in offering him to his eternal Father, but likewiſe often approach to him in

the holy communion; becauſe they are engaged in the ſame cauſe with him for the overthrow of ſin, and therefore may hope for plentiful ſupplies of his grace for the carrying on a vigorous war, and being conquerors in the end. But for thoſe that live in ſin, and take no care to deliver themſelves from that ſlavery, methinks the very appearing before this holy victim ſhould be great confuſion to them for their wickedneſs, and a daily reproach of their inſincerity and counterfeit devotion as often as they pretend to adore and pay homage to him. For while they maintain the cauſe of ſin within their own ſouls, with what face can they behold him, who died for the deſtruction of ſin? And what abominable diſſimulation muſt it be, when they bow down to adore him? It is all the traitor's kiſs; for having treaſon in their hearts, they muſt be wicked children, diſloyal ſervants, and falſe adorers, who bow down before God, but ſerve the devil. Is this to be Chriſtians? Much leſs criminal is their idolatry, who knowing not God, blindly worſhip *Dagon* and *Baal*, than the deteſtable religion of theſe, who, thus confeſſing God, to his face ſet the devil before him: Scourges and whips are too little to drive theſe out of the temple, which they

ſo often prophane: And however they are ſpared here, yet certainly a more rigorous judgment waits for them than for the worſt of Heathens.

And yet, O God, how infinite are the abuſes of Chriſtians in this kind; who, having a knowledge of all thy mercies, ſtill live obſtinate in ſin! They appear often in thy preſence, adore before thee, and yet neither love nor ſerve thee. How many of theſe are daily in thy temples, and even approach thy altar, where none can come thus polluted to partake of that holy food, but with damnation to themſelves? Look, O Jeſus, on thy people whom thou haſt purchaſed with thy blood; touch their hearts with thy grace, that they may be ſenſible of their obſtinacy and blindneſs; that they may hear and follow what thou here teacheſt in this ſacred myſtery. Be thou the food of our ſouls, the principle of a new life: Come this day and dwell within us; and ſo eſtabliſh us in our duty, by the cure of all our weakneſſes, that we may ever abide in thee.

Corpus-Chriſti Day.

GOSPEL.

John vi. 56. Ends verſe 59.

MY *fleſh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed: He that eats my fleſh, and drinks my blood, abides in me, and I in him.* This feſtival is appointed as a grateful memorial of that day, when Chriſt inſtituted the bleſſed Euchariſt, and left us his own ſacred body and blood, under the forms of bread and wine, for the food and nouriſhment of our ſouls. The myſtery is great, and being more proportioned to the infinite power and goodneſs of God, than to our reaſon, meets here with exceptions, as if God were not to be credited, in ſuch works, where reaſon comprehends not the *manner* in which they are done. But is not the doubting Chriſtian here much overſeen, in not reflecting, that faith is the reaſon of a believer, and that it is as much unreaſonable to queſtion what God ſays, becauſe reaſon does not comprehend it, as it is to

believe man, when he teaches contrary to what we ſee and know. What plainer and more poſitive words could Chriſt have uſed for expreſſing this truth, of giving us his fleſh to eat, and his blood to drink? It was in this ſenſe the *Jews* queſtioned what he ſaid, and their exception is a confirmation of the truth delivered. And now there can be no other exception againſt it, but theirs, that is, the difficulty of believing what Chriſt ſays; as if the difficulty of a myſtery could diſpenſe with a Chriſtian's faith, and the hardneſs of the ſaying were reaſon enough for him to give it ſome other turn, ſo to render it more ſuitable to his own apprehenſion.

But why ſhould the exception be made here? All Chriſtians read of the rivers of *Egypt* being turned into blood, and they believe it; of the duſt turned into lice, and they believe it; of *Lot*'s wife turned into a pillar of ſalt, and they believe it; of the water turned into wine at the marriage of *Cana* of *Galilee*, and they believe it; and and why not then that the bread and wine is here changed into the body and blood of Chriſt, when Chriſt himſelf, after his bleſſing, ſo poſitively declares, *This is my body, this is my blood.* They who believe God to be Almighty, cannot queſtion, but that

power, which made all things of nothing, can change one thing into another. The devil believed it, when he ſaid, *If thou be the Son of God, command that theſe ſtones be made bread:* How then can a Chriſtian call it into doubt, when he confeſſes him that ſays it to be infinite in power and truth.

It is true, he cannot diſcover it to be what Chriſt ſays with his eyes, nor with his taſte; but he hears it from Chriſt, and is not this the ſenſe by which faith comes to the ſoul? *Faith comes by hearing.* And having heard it from Chriſt, is not his authority and truth ſufficient for his believing, although his eyes concur not with their evidence? What need of other evidence, when Chriſt has ſaid it? Were Chriſt preſent in the Euchariſt in a viſible manner, there would be then reaſon to conſult the eyes; but his preſence being ineffable, and in a ſpiritual manner of being, to conſult them here, would be to aſk their advice, upon what is inviſible, and falls not within their ſphere. When the Holy Ghoſt deſcended in the form of a dove, and the angels appeared at the ſepulchre as young men, was there any information of the eyes to atteſt the preſence of thoſe ſpiritual beings under thoſe forms? No, but there is a divine authority that aſſerts it, and upon

this it is believed. If then Chriſt be here preſent, and yet not in a corporeal or viſible manner, the authority of Chriſt declaring it, is all the ground that faith requires; and to aſk the eyes, in this caſe, is neither the part of philoſopher nor divine.

Faith then teaches, that Chriſt is really preſent in the Euchariſt; and why? That thus he may communicate himſelf to the faithful, that he may abide in them, and they in him, and even ſo as to live by him. We have a life of corruption, which we receive from *Adam*, and thoſe who live according to it, live in corruption: There is another life, which is that of Chriſt; and thoſe who live according to it, live in holineſs; Chriſt himſelf is the principle of this life; for this end is he preſent in the Euchariſt, that being received by the faithful, he may be to them the beginning of this life. Here then may Chriſtians ſee what thanks are due to their Redeemer on this account; and likewiſe, what they are to propoſe to themſelves, as often as they go to the holy communion. The ſenſe of their ſins ought to raiſe in them a deteſtation of their paſt life; this deteſtation is to be followed with earneſt deſires of a new life; and Chriſt being the beginning of this new life, how ſolicitous ought they to be to partake

of

of him, that, by his powerful preſence, they may be ſtrengthened againſt all the dangers of their corruption, and have ſuch a foundation laid of a better life, as to hope to live by him.

This is the deſign of the divine goodneſs in the inſtitution, and ought to be propoſed by the faithful, as the end of their approaching to this table of our Lord. Whence it is eaſy to diſcover their fault, who have little deſire, and therefore come ſeldom to partake of this holy food; there being too much reaſon to fear, that ſuch have no ſincere diſlike of their weakneſs and corruption, who have ſo little concern in making uſe of the remedies, which the divine mercy has appointed for their help: Their fault likewiſe, who, in approaching to it, make little preparation, but come on certain days, as it were by cuſtom; for how does this kind of indifferency anſwer either the goodneſs of God, or their own wants? How can they expect the fruit of life, when they come without life to it, but rather ſo, as ſcarce to have a ſenſe of what they do? Laſtly, their fault, who, making a tolerable preparation, think only of receiving ſome paſſing holineſs, but not of making their ſouls an abode for Chriſt, or of living by him; and therefore as ſoon as they have re-

ceived, allowing only for a ſhort recollection, they preſently forſake him, returning into the method of their uſual diſſipation and weakneſs. In this, forgetting the principal end for which Chriſt ordained this Sacrament, which being to eſtabliſh his abode in the ſouls of the faithful, and to communicate his life to them, they cannot but be ſenſible, that by hindering this effect, and rejecting his ſpirit, while they receive his body, they pervert the order of grace, make void the deſigned mercy, and are ungrateful to the infinite goodneſs of their Redeemer.

What therefore are Chriſtians to do for preventing this evil? They are to be mindful, that the end of receiving Chriſt is not only to receive a paſſing grace, ſuch as may ſanctify them for the preſent, but ſo to receive Chriſt; that he may abide in them, and be the principle of a new life; and therefore, after receiving, their obligation is, and their endeavours muſt be anſwerable, to live by the ſpirit of Chriſt, ſo that all their thoughts, affections, deſires, and actions, be influenced and governed, not by their wonted corruption, which is the life of *Adam*, but by Chriſt's Spirit; and this it is, for Chriſt to live in them, and they in him. What care then muſt there be, to ſuppreſs all evil paſſions, to renounce the ways of

ſin, of ſenſuality, pride, injuſtice, and ſloth, to follow the ways of charity and peace, to practiſe humility and patience, to do the will of God in all things, and ſeek his glory? This is putting on the new man, it is the life of Chriſt, and ſuch a union with him is the way to be eternally united with him in glory. Grant, O God, that with this diſpoſition I may always approach to thy table, that, in receiving the bread of life, I may live by it. O Chriſt, the living bread, make me live by thee: Bread of heaven, thus conduct me through this life of miſery to reſt in thee. Bread eternal, quicken my ſoul with the true deſire of eternity, till I come to the unchangeable poſſeſſion of thee.

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus-Chriſti.

Second after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1. *John* iii. 13. Ends verſe 18.

HE *that has the ſubſtance of this world, and ſeeing his brother in neceſſity, ſhuts his heart againſt him: How does the love of God abide in him?* Chriſtians often talk of the love of God, but here is the trial of it: And though it be not ſo demonſtrative on the one part, as to conclude, that whoever relieves his brother in neceſſity, has certainly the love of God in him; becauſe it may be excluded, by living in the breach of other duties; yet, on the other part, the apoſtle declares it is evident, that whoever refuſes to give this relief, being able to do it, has not the love of God abiding in him. This is a perplexing conſequence, enough to raiſe ſcruples in the hearts of many; and though

I am ſo ſenſible of the great miſchiefs of a diſturbed and uneaſy conſcience, as to prevent it all I can: Yet knowing too, that a falſe peace of mind is attended with eternal evils, therefore to move ſcruples here, I think it as great a duty, as in other caſes it is to lay them. And though I cannot ſo far ſatisfy any as poſitively to determine how much, in particular, and how often every one is to afford relief to their neighbour, becauſe this, admitting of a great latitude, cannot be reduced to a point; and becauſe of the many cheats of thoſe who pretend to neceſſity, and feel it not; yet there are ſome general principles of Chriſtianity, which give light in this matter, and may help to diſcover very conſiderable omiſſions in this obligation of charity, and direct to a more exact complying with it.

For our rule being to *love our neighbour as ourſelves*, and to aſſiſt him in his neceſſities out of what we can ſpare, and is truly ſuperfluous to us, we ſee here an obligation of charity, upon the evidence of others wants, and knowledge of ourſelves having ſomething to ſpare; for this then in charity and juſtice is their right; becauſe what is ſuperfluous to us, is neceſſary for the poor. But what is ſuperfluous? Is that to be reckoned ſo, which is neceſſary for eating, cloathing,

family, ſervants, for the education or proviſion of children, for divertiſements? Truly, what is *neceſſary* for theſe ends cannot be judged *ſuperfluous*; but how much is there ſuperfluous of that, which, in theſe particulars, is often reputed neceſſary? If no more were expended on the table and cloathing, than nature requires for decency and ſupport (allowing likewiſe for the difference of conditions) there could be no reaſon of complaint: But if we once ſum up what is here laid out to provoke and *indulge a vicious appetite, for pomp, magnificence, oſtentation, and exceſs*, we ſhall ſoon find, there is much greater proviſion made for *theſe corrupt ends*, than for *neceſſity* or *convenience*; and that in many families there is more thus ſingly laid out in the year, than might very well ſerve for the ſubſiſtence of a multitude of poor. Now all this muſt be reckoned as ſo much *waſte* and *ſuperfluous*; and this being the right of the poor, it has been nothing leſs than miſ-ſpending their ſtock. Then if we look on farther, and ſee how much in the year is ſpent, by calling over the books of taverns, play-houſes, muſic-houſes, and places of other entertainments, will not theſe immenſe ſums be an evidence againſt thouſands, to prove how much they had that was ſuperfluous? For however diverſion

ſometimes, and the obliging a friend, may be a plea for this kind of expence; yet how very little is it, that can be placed to this account, in compariſon of what is there left, merely for idleneſs or ill cuſtom, to ſatisfy a vain curioſity, or gratify very unjuſt deſires? So much then as has been thus idly or viciouſly ſpent, in juſtice ought to have been applied to the relief of the poor; the manner of expending it ſhews it was ſuperfluous, and this proves whoſe right it was; and will be an evidence againſt thoſe of their being void of charity, who have thus miſemployed what was entruſted in their hands for the help of others.

For ſince the obligation of charity is to love our neighbour as ourſelves; how ſhort do thoſe come of this duty, who prefer their own vanities, their diverſions and vice, before his neceſſities? If they want bread and cloaths, and I, being plentifully ſupplied in theſe, want to ſatisfy my curioſity, my unneceſſary or diſordered deſires; which of theſe wants ought to be firſt relieved? Truly, they that ever find money to anſwer their own inclinations, but have it not to help their neighbour in his neceſſities, have a large ſtock of vicious ſelf-love; but for charity, it ſeems as far from them, as they are from loving their neighbour as themſelves.

What then, are not men maſters of their own purſes and eſtates; and may not they lay out their money in any lawful way, as they ſhall think fitting? The general practice, I fear, anſwers favourably to this queſtion; but according to the principles of Chriſtianity, I think, whatever title and right a man has to an eſtate, yet (in relation to God) he never becomes maſter of what is ſuperfluous in it: For this God ſeems to have reſerved to himſelf, and by an eternal ordinance, has ſettled it as the right of the poor. So that though in providing for family and children, they uſe no more than what is their own; yet when they come to ſatisfy all thoſe imaginary neceſſities, which are the ſuggeſtions of vanity, curioſity, or the love of pleaſure, this is generally ſpending what is not their own; for as to this part, which can be thus eaſily ſpared, they are in a more particular manner ſtewards, and an account of it will be demanded of them: And what a diſmal one will it be, when it ſhall appear, that folly, liberty, luxury, and exceſs, have devoured thoſe vaſt ſums, which ought to have been applied to the relief of the poor.

Wherein then is the advantage of the rich above the poor? It is in having in their hands, wherewith to ſupply all their

own real wants, and likewiſe the opportunity of diſtributing the like help to thoſe in diſtreſs; ſo by their riches to provide for this life and the next. But to think they have the privilege of laying out their money, not only as neceſſity, decency, and reaſon ſhall require, but of throwing it away with both hands, to gratify every idle, vain, pleaſing, or extravagant inclination of their corrupt nature; this, I think, is a very great miſtake, and I believe one of the reaſons that renders ſalvation ſo difficult to the rich man; becauſe by this method he is not only guilty of a great injuſtice by defrauding the poor, but, as ſtolen goods ſeldom thrive, he miſpends what he takes from them, in ſuch ways, as are moſt prejudicial to his eternal good; in maintaining idleneſs, ſtrengthening his corrupt paſſions, ſupporting ſelf-love, expoſing himſelf to dangers, encreaſing difficulties, nouriſhing vice, and engaging daily more and more in all the ſnares of the devil, the fleſh, and the world: And thus living on in the abuſe of thoſe bleſſings, which were given him as a means of ſalvation; and turning them to his own ruin; what wonder is it, that it is as hard for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of heaven, as for a camel to paſs through the eye of a needle? A hard ſaying: But, O God, how

many viſible demonſtrations have we to believe it true, whilſt even amongſt Chriſtians, and thoſe, who otherwiſe ſeem to be men of principles, we ſee ſo general a blindneſs in this point, that amongſt ſo many rich, there appear ſo very few, but what go on without ſcruple in this broad way of injuſtice and uncharitableneſs, and not thinking of the true Chriſtian uſe of what God has given them? Thus corrupt is the world, and it is only thou, O God of heaven, canſt remedy this evil. Give then a ſenſe of true charity to all thoſe whom thou haſt favoured with earthly bleſſings: Turn their hearts from all their evil ways; and ſo open their eyes, that they may no more abuſe, to their own damnation, what thou haſt given them for their everlaſting good. Grant us all a true knowledge of our duty in this point, ſoften our hearts towards our neighbour, and in our relief of his diſtreſſes may we have ever reaſon to hope, that thy love abides in us.

Sunday within the Octave of Corpus-Chriſti.

Second after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xiv. 16. Ends verſe 24.

ALL *began to excuſe themſelves.* The ſubject of this Goſpel, is the parable of thoſe who were invited to a great ſupper, and all deſiring to be excuſed. Now though it is not ſtrange, that perſons taken up with buſineſs ſhould not anſwer the expectation of their friend, who has invited them to a banquet, and there can be no reaſonable exception againſt the excuſe they ſend; yet when we conſider what is here ſignified by this ſupper, that it is the happineſs of heaven, the eternal banquet of God's elect, out of which there is nothing but miſery and deſpair: Here preſently appears the unreaſonableneſs of all excuſes, becauſe this is a point that will admit of none; and the

juſtice of that ſentence is very obvious, which excludes all from this table of glory, who find reaſons for not anſwering the invitation of his goodneſs, who calls them to it.

The inſtruction then of this Goſpel, not a forced explication, but directly deſigned by Jeſus Chriſt, is, that God having prepared in the next life, eternal happineſs, and invited all to enter into thoſe joys, all are bound, while in this world, to prepare themſelves for partaking of this mercy, and that whoever neglects to make this preparation, muſt unavoidably fall under the ſentence of a perpetual excluſion. Whence the heart of every Chriſtian muſt be ſtrongly poſſeſſed with this principle; that his greateſt buſineſs is that of ſalvation; that no other ought to take place of it; and that to give the preference to any other is criminal.

To eſtabliſh the truth of this principle, Chriſt was pleaſed to make choice of ſuch inſtances, for ſuppoſed excuſes, as are in themſelves things both very innocent and lawful; ſuch are to go ſee a farm, to try oxen, to marry a wife, or to be buſied in family concerns. No buſineſs of this world can be more warrantable than theſe, and yet Chriſt has declared it; that if a Chriſtian, through his immoderate application to theſe, is negligent in making proviſion for

his eternal ſtate, that upon this he ſhall be excluded; *Not one of thoſe men ſhall taſte my ſupper.*

It is not therefore enough for a Chriſtian's ſecurity, to conſider the lawfulneſs of his profeſſion; or, upon examination, to diſcover no ſort of engagement, that is eſteemed ſinful or unjuſt; for however this be a very comfortable proſpect, yet ſince he is bound to provide for his eternal well-being, if this be neglected, he cannot think himſelf in a ſafe way; and whatever is the occaſion of ſuch neglect, he muſt judge it in this reſpect unlawful. If then he has his heart ſo full of any part of this world, that he lives forgetful of God, and taken off from all thoſe exercises, which are the neceſſary means for bringing him to the poſſeſſion of happineſs, he muſt conſider this as a ſtate of injuſtice towards God and his ſoul, and is bound, either wholly to quit ſuch employments, which are the occaſion of it, or elſe learn to perform them in a Chriſtian way, that is, with ſuch moderation of ſpirit, that while he takes care of this life, he do not neglect the other.

This, however, ought not to give any diſquiet to thoſe, who, upon ſome accident, have their thoughts ſo diſturbed, that they are incapable, for a time, of going on with

their uſual exerciſes, and hence ſeem wholly at a ſtand, as to eternity: For in this life, there can be no ſecurity againſt ſurpriſing accidents, nor privilege from ſuch interruptions; an induſtrious ſpirit will ſoon recover itſelf from this weight or diſſipation, and either by humility, or new vigour, make an advantage of it. But the deſign of the Goſpel is to awaken thoſe whoſe life is a general diſtraction, ſuch as gives them not leiſure to think of heaven, or of God, but ſo poſſeſſes or overwhelms their minds, that they ſeem to live, as if they had no concern beyond this world, or ſo, at leaſt, as if the buſineſs of ſalvation was not worth, or needed not their care. All theſe ought to feel ſome ſting of conſcience, and not put it by as a groundleſs ſcruple; for certainly, when the concern of eternity, which ought to have the firſt place, is put by; when the ſoul is languiſhing under many diſtempers, dark and dull as to all that belongs to ſalvation, full of the world, and empty of God, and no care is uſed, in theſe unhappy circumſtances, for bringing it to a ſenſe of its miſery; is it not time to take its ſtate into conſideration, and not to go on under the flattery of groundleſs hopes, when ſo poſitive a ſentence of damnation is pronounced againſt this blindneſs?

If this be reaſonable, then let all thoſe, with a jealous eye, take a review of themſelves, who are under any of the circumſtances marked out by the Goſpel: *Firſt*, Thoſe, who have bought a farm, and muſt go to ſee it; thoſe ſubject to idleneſs, divertiſements, pleaſures, prodigality, and the pride of riches. *Secondly*, Thoſe, who have bought oxen, and muſt go to try them, by which is ſignified the danger of all manner of curioſity, whether of ſenſe or ſpirit; all manner of labours, employments, and temporal affairs, which overwhelm the mind. *Thirdly*, Thoſe who marry, that is, ſuch as are engaged in ſuch bonds, either to family or concupiſcence, that the ſpirit is rather a ſlave than free. All theſe have reaſon to call themſelves to account; for though the face of things, upon a general view, may appear innocent, yet ſince all theſe engagements are too apt to poſſeſs the ſoul, and divert it from giving due attention to the greater buſineſs of eternity, both in the ſervice of God, and in the care that is abſolutely neceſſary for the well-being of the ſoul, amidſt ſo many infirmities and diſtempers, to which it is ſubject, and dangers, with which it is encompaſſed; theſe are obliged to look well into themſelves, and ſee all be managed with that Chriſtian pru-

dence, that if they are happily free from all kinds of vice, which can render them unworthy, they be not excluded from the banquet by neglect.

This was the fate of the perſons mentioned, who being all ſuch as had their ſatisfactions here, and ſeemed to think themſelves well in this life, and deſirous of enjoying what they had, it is a ſufficient hint of their indiſpoſition for hearing the call and direction of God, who are in the like circumſtances; and while we ſee ſuch as theſe rejected as unworthy, and others remarkable only for their miſery, as the poor, the weak, the blind, the lame, made choice of to fill up their places; the concluſion is very plain, though not a reliſhing one to ſenſe, nor eaſy to be comprehended, that it is a kind of misfortune to be poſſeſſed with any thing in this life, which we eſteem our happineſs: And, on the contrary, a kind of happineſs to be miſerable here, that is, to have nothing which we admire or love: Theſe being perſons ſenſible of their poverty and miſery, and therefore, in readineſs to anſwer their invitation to a place of plenty and reſt; whilſt the others finding their happineſs here, are neither deſirous nor prepared for a change: And therefore, if they labour not to diſengage their hearts from what is preſent, a-

gainſt the time when they ſhall be called to the banquet, they will be for ever excluded, in puniſhment of their neglect and notorious ingratitude, in confining their happineſs to the bleſſings received, without endeavours of loving or ſeeking the giver.

O God, if this be the condition of thy gifts, that to reſt in them without ſeeking thee, will be our eternal unhappineſs, teach us a right uſe of whatever we receive, and eſtabliſh well this principle in our hearts; that our happineſs is not in them, but in thee; and that we are ſtill unhappy, till we come to the poſſeſſion of thee. Thus may we, all our lives, have a ſenſe of being miſerable; and let this ſenſe keep us ſo in expectation of a better life, that whenever we are called, we may be found ready to embrace the invitation, and be admitted gueſts to the banquet thy mercy has prepared.

Third Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet.* v. 6. Ends verſe 11.

BE *ſober and watch: For your enemy the devil goes about as a roaring lion, ſeeking whom he may devour.* To ſecure us againſt all the deſigns of a malicious and diligent enemy, the apoſtle adviſes us to be *ſober*, that is, to obſerve ſuch a moderation and temper in all our deſires, paſſions, affections, thoughts, and whatever concerns we have; and be ſo *watchful* herein, as to give no opportunity to our enemy of making a prey of us, who is ever waiting to improve every little diſorder, for the drawing us wholly ino this ſnares. For the good of our ſouls has a great reſemblance with the health of our bodies, as theſe, though compoſed of very contrary elements, are yet ſound enough, as long as the different qualities are in a good proportion of temper; but are preſently in diſorder, and haſtening to death, as ſoon as any one of them, whether heat, or moiſture, or cold,

becomes immoderate, and corrupts the reſt: Juſt ſo it is in our ſpiritual health: We have variety of contrary paſſions within us, which can do us no prejudice, as long as we keep them compoſed and moderate; but if once any one of them gains upon the reſt, and grows to an exceſs, the temper of the ſoul is preſently diſordered, it is ſick, and death cannot be far off. The ground of this lies very open, becauſe the action of our heart and ſoul in this mortal ſtate is ſo very limited and confined, that if any one paſſion or deſire becomes violent, it carries the ſoul, as a torrent, along with it, and is a perpetual diſtraction and hinderance to it in regard of all duties. So that whereas the heart ought ever to be free in the ſervice of God, and through that love it bears him, be watchful and attentive in the diſcharge of every Chriſtian obligation, by this exceſs in any one point, it becomes ſtraitened, and is in danger of being withdrawn from the duty it owes its Lord.

To prevent, then, every paſſion, affection, or deſire of the ſoul, from growing immoderate, or to an exceſs, is the *ſobriety* St *Peter* exacts from every Chriſtian, not only in regard of objects that are evidently criminal; for all that is otherwiſe ſufficiently forbid, as wholly alienating the heart from

God, and being the condition of thoſe unhappy ones, whom the devil waits not now to devour, but who, being his, are already devoured by him: But chiefly in relation to all that, which being indifferent in itſelf, becomes dangerous only by exceſs: It is here the Chriſtian is adviſed to be *ſober and watchful;* and the caution is ſo comprehenſive, that I know not any one concern belonging to this life, which directly falls not under it. The apoſtle in this place mentions but one, which is in regard of the misfortunes of this world, and the care every one is obliged to have, in providing for the neceſſary aſſiſtance of themſelves, and thoſe belonging to them: And here, though the obligation be ſo very great, that the neglect of it makes the Chriſtian worſe than the heathen; yet while he is thus ſtrictly bound to be *careful*, he is ſtill as ſtrictly forbid the permitting this care to grow to the exceſs of being *ſolicitous:* So that however he may be reduced to thoſe frighful circumſtances of ſeeing nothing but miſery and diſtreſs before him, yet is he not allowed by the apoſtle to let his heart be ſeized with anxiety, or the terrors of a dejected ſpirit; but adviſed to humble himſelf under the powerful hand of God, caſting all his ſolicitude on him, being ſober and watchful,

that he be not made a prey to his enemy. Now, if the exceſs of care, in a matter of ſo great and ſenſible a concern as this, lays the ſoul open, ſo as to render its condition hazardous; what affection is there, though in itſelf commendable or innocent, which, in its *exceſs*, ought not to be the ſubject of the Chriſtian's care? Parents and children, huſband, wife, and friends, have a duty of love towards each other; and yet if this, on any ſide, becomes immoderate, they need not doubt, but in this they give the devil ſome hopes and encouragement to keep an eye upon them. He knows what a perpetual diſtraction this gives to a ſoul, by its frights and cares; how great ſolicitude it raiſes, how many duties it diſturbs, what vain expences it occaſions; that it will certainly indiſpoſe them on their death-beds, if not make them unfit to die: And that if on ſome lucky hit their duty to God happens not to be conſiſtent with what is deſired or expected from them, they will chuſe rather to forfeit that than be uneaſy or unkind to thoſe they love; hence the devil is ever hovering about them, watching to promote every occaſion of evil; and if they keep not as ſtrict a watch on themſelves, in checking whatever is immoderate in their affections,

they will certainly be in danger of anſwering all his expectations.

The like hazard is in regard of company, diverſion, cloaths, preferment, eating, drinking, gaming; nay, even of buſineſs and employments too, and whatever concern there is in getting or keeping of money; for though all theſe be very lawful in their kind and juſt degree; yet whenever they gain ſo far upon a ſoul, as to become its great concern, and to command it, inſtead of being commanded by it; ſuch a ſoul is evidently in danger from this exceſs, however harmleſs the thing may be in itſelf. For the heart of man cannot bear any extraordinary application to one thing, but it certainly indiſpoſes it for other duties, and this one thing becomes a diſtraction to every thing elſe: So that whereas his temporal and eternal good depends on the obſervance of that golden rule, *Age quod agis*; of being attentive to every duty as he performs it, and carefully doing what he does; this ſets his heart upon the wander, and is the occaſion of doing nothing well; and then it ſeldom ſtops here; for, though for ſome time it only gives diſturbance; yet at length it leads ſenſibly into greater inconveniencies, makes way for ſin, and puts by many duties; ſo that of an imperfect Chriſtian, he too of-

ten ends in being no Chriſtian at all: For the immoderate love of ſomething worldly, generally excluding the love of God, what does he become at length, but a body without life, that is, a mere carcaſe? And as he thus lives, ſo ſickneſs finds him; and ſo it is to be feared, death carries him away; preſenting a ſoul before God, full of nothing but the world; there was his treaſure, and there it is ſtill, God is no more to him than he was before; and his delight being not in him, what can he be but miſerable? And why all this, but becauſe he was not *ſober* and *watchful?*

Hence I cannot but think it a matter, not only of diſcretion, but of duty, for every Chriſtian, in his reſpective degree, to be very careful in avoiding all that which is apt too much to poſſeſs the heart, and take it off the obligation of his ſtate. Being fond of ale-houſes and taverns, of drink and company, has drawn many of the lower and middle rank from their buſineſs to ruin: Gaming, ſports, and entertainments, in their exceſs, have been the overthrow of very good families: The love of muſic, of money, of reputation, of news, of diverſion, of idleneſs, and company, has ſpoiled many a churchman: *Hic ceciderunt fortes Iſrael.* Here great numbers have irrecoverably fal-

len; their not keeping a ſtrict hand on themſelves, in moderating their inclinations, has taken off their hearts from their buſineſs, has increaſed their paſſions, has firſt made them idle, and by degrees brought them to worſe than nothing. Ought not then every Chriſtian, as ſoon as he perceives himſelf with a fond ſatisfaction inclining to any of theſe ways, which by advancing in them have ruined ſo many, to be preſently jealous of himſelf, ſuſpect all the reaſons of treachery, which puſh him forward; give ear to the apoſtle in being ſober and watchful, and put a ſtop to that in the beginning, which otherwiſe, with a little encouragement, will prove too ſtrong for him, and not let him ſee his miſery, till he is in it, and then paſt remedy?

O God, when I conſider the infinite misfortunes, that have their beginning from no other root than this; what waſte of eſtates, ruin of families, loſs of ſouls, ſcandal of religion, and what intolerable abuſes have by this way crept into the ſanctuary, I cannot but lament our common miſery, and implore the powerful help of thy grace to prevent it for the future. Help us then, O God, in this our weakneſs, and by thy light from above, make us ſenſible of the dangers that are before us; and that preſuming

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on our own ſtrength, is no ſecurity againſt them: Grant, we may be ſober and watchful, moderate and temperate in all things, that we may avoid his ſnares, who is watching to devour us, and never venture raſhly on thoſe ways, where ſo many have periſhed.

Third Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xv. 1. Ends verſe 10.

THERE ſhall be joy in heaven upon one ſinner that does penance. The whole goſpel is an encouragement to ſinners, to depend on the mercies of God, in hopes of forgiveneſs. This inclination to mercy was ſo remarkable in Chriſt, that the *Phariſees* reproached him for converſing with ſinners; but their ignorance or malice is no diſcouragement to his goodneſs; he takes away their ſcandal, by propoſing to them a parable of the ſhepherd, leaving his ninety-nine in the deſert, and going to look for the one ſheep that was loſt, and having declared the joy of its being found, thus concludes his remonſtrance; *So I ſay to you, there ſhall be joy in heaven upon one ſinner that does penance.*

This goodneſs of God, is that which ought to raiſe up the hearts of all thoſe ſinners, who, ſenſible of their unhappy

ſtate, deſire the favour of their offended God: For though, when they conſider the number and weight of their crimes, their ingratitude under the infinite bleſſings of heaven, and their injuſtice in preferring their own vile inclinations, to the commands and moſt holy will of God, they have hence reaſon to tremble under the apprehenſion of that juſtice which is due to their wickedneſs; yet, turning on the other ſide, when they ſee God, though thus provoked to puniſh, yet ſo full of goodneſs, as not to will the death of ſinners, but to deſire they ſhould be converted and live; ſo full of compaſſion, as to invite and call upon them to return; ſo infinite in mercy, as even to ſeek and follow them through all their diſorders, and offer to lead them back by the arms of his power and goodneſs; what ſinner can here be at a ſtand within himſelf, and queſtion whether God will receive his repentance, and ſhew mercy to him? A ſinner blind and obſtinate in evil, may ſay, he will not return; but if he looks on God, and deſires to return, he cannot ſay God will not receive him.

Let but ſuch chriſtians caſt their eyes on the ſhepherd, who reſenting the loſs of one ſheep gone aſtray, leaves the body

of his flock in the deſert, to go in ſearch of the ſtray; let them conſider his ſolicitude and labours, all bent upon this enquiry, and that having at length found him, he lays him on his own ſhoulders, ſo to carry him back, at his own coſt, to the fold. Here let them tell me; does this ſhepherd deſire the return of his loſt ſheep? Why is he ſolicitous? Why does he ſeek? Why does he take him on his ſhoulders? Why does he call his friends to rejoice with him, upon his being found? Does not all this ſpeak his deſire of recovering that which was loſt? From this parable let all dejected ſinners now turn their eyes upon God, and ſee if he be not much more deſirous of their return. For was it not he, who compaſſionating the unhappy ſtate of man loſt by ſin, ſent his only Son made man, as the good ſhepherd, to look after the ſheep that was loſt? And did not he ſeek him, who being God eſſentially bleſſed in himſelf, independent of man, yet ſubjected himſelf to all the miſeries of human life, and to the moſt rigorous puniſhment of ſin, that he might find him? And can ſinners then be in ſuſpenſe, whether he be willing to receive them? Let them look again upon this their ſhepherd, and tell me why did he

converſe with ſinners? Why did he preach to them? Why did he ſigh, and pray, and faſt, and lament their blindneſs? Why did he receive the moſt notorious offenders coming to him, and undertake to be their advocate both before men and God? Why did he ſubmit himſelf to reproach, and his ſhoulders to ſtripes and the croſs, taking upon him their iniquities, and offering to heal their wounds by his own? Why does he here declare, that their converſion is the joy of heaven? Is not all this a demonſtration of the deſire he has for the ſalvation of all? Is it not this a call to ſinners to return? Is it not an aſſurance, that, if they ſeek mercy, they ſhall find it; and that, if they deſire pardon of their offences, God will meet their wiſhes with joy?

Why then ſhould the greateſt ſinners doubt of this mercy? It is true, the horror of their crimes muſt terrify; but can they ſay, their ſins are greater, than God is able or willing to forgive? What if injuſtice had been their crime, as in the publican; what if uncleanneſs, as in *Magdalen*: what if murder, as in the thief; what if blaſphemy, as in *Saul*; what if infidelity or apoſtaſy, as in *Peter*? Have not ſuch ſins been already forgiven?

And were not theſe ſinners upon their converſion embraced with a more particular love, and diſtinguiſhed by moſt ſignal favours of heaven? And is God's arm now ſhortened, or his goodneſs leſſened, that others, upon their return, ſhould not find mercy? No, God is unchangeable, and his mercies endure for ever: He ſtill calls upon ſinners, he invites them, and now Chriſt offers his ſhoulders, that by virtue of his paſſion and death, their ſins may be cancelled.

There can nothing therefore be wanting, but on their own part; if they have true abhorrence of their crimes; if the ſenſe of having offended their God, raiſes ſuch a trouble in their minds that they have a diſlike of themſelves, and are confounded at the thoughts of their paſt ingratitude, miſery and blindneſs; if they fear nothing more, than the effects of their own weakneſs and corruption; if they humble themſelves before God, begging pardon for all offences, and upon the experience of their miſery, ſolicit for the ſuccours of divine grace for their eſtabliſhment in good; if they reſolve upon a new life; and, upon theſe reſolutions, ſeparate themſelves from the uſual occaſions of ſin; if thus they come pro-

ſtrate before the throne of grace, as Chriſt has appointed, diſtruſting themſelves, and depending wholly upon the merits of their redeemer, that mercy cannot fail them, which they ſeek; God will embrace them, and heaven will rejoice in their return.

This aſſurance God has, at all times, given to the greateſt criminals, and Chriſt has ſufficiently confirmed it in all he has done and ſuffered; and now if the moſt notorious of ſinners have this, whereon to build their hopes of mercy, upon their ſincerely ſeeking it; ſo that for them to deſpair, is the greateſt affront to the divine goodneſs; how much ſtronger ought to be the hope of other chriſtians, who have never lived in the known practice of wilful ſin, have fallen under no other guilt, but of overſight or ſurprize, and at preſent are conſcious of nothing, but ſuch infirmities, as are almoſt inſeparable from this ſtate of weakneſs? I do not pretend however, to perſuade even theſe, that they have no reaſon to fear, or nothing to lament, or have nothing which ought to be the juſt matter of a daily repentance; for it is certain they have all this in them, enough to keep their ſouls in the ſtate of a perpetual humiliation under the hand of God, and to oblige them

to a watchful fidelity in all they do. But if theſe permit their ſpirit to be ſo perplexed with fears, as to loſe all courage in the performance of the beſt exerciſes, to have their minds oppreſſed with endleſs doubts and confuſion, and to be at a ſtand in every duty; it is certain, they are then wanting in that hope they ought to have in God, and reflect not, how infinite his mercies are, who, upon ſeeing failings in themſelves, and the frequent diſappointments of their good purpoſes, preſently are inclined to give themſelves for loſt, as if God could not ſave them, becauſe they cannot ſave themſelves.

This diſtruſtful trouble has a ſecret pride at the root which permits them not to bear the conviction of their being imperfect, nor to have patience with thoſe infirmities which God mercifully permits for their exerciſe, and greater virtue; and being under this diſquiet, they have ſcarce hopes of ſalvation, becauſe they ſee not things ſo well within them, as to build this hope on themſelves. But this being a diſpoſition ſo unbecoming chriſtians, who are commanded to diſtruſt themſelves, and reſt with their whole confidence in God, theſe ought with more patience to ſubmit to their poverty, and learn to have

comfort and hope in the infinite mercies of God, when they can have none in themſelves: Thus they are bound to moderate their diſquiets; and if they are not induſtrious in thus checking this ſanctified pride, they may eaſily contract by this a greater guilt, than that, which they pretend as the occaſion of their grief. Teach, O God, theſe uneaſy and impatient ſouls to depend with greater confidence on thee; make them more diſcreet in their fears, and ſtrengthen them in hope: Let the greatneſs of thy mercies draw all ſinners to thee, becauſe thy mercies are above all their ſins. Confirm me in this hope; in this may I live, and when death comes, in this hope may I breathe my laſt; That thou art full of mercy, O God, and that none ſhall be confounded, who put their truſt in thee.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. viii. 18. Ends verſe 23.

THE creature is ſubject to vanity againſt its will. To a ſoul that loves God, this life is a baniſhment and ſlavery, wherein, though it reſolutely makes oppoſition againſt all that is ſin; yet it ſuffers ſo much from its own natural corruption, from the continual ſolicitations of pride, paſſion, and concupiſcence, and this even againſt its will, that it renders this life very uneaſy; and it cannot but grieve, to meet with ſo many contradictions and hinderances in that way, whereby it aſpires to God. Hence it is, that a ſoul poſſeſſed with this charity or love of God, waits with an earneſt expectation, to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, into the glorious liberty of the children of God; it groans within itſelf; and, as it were, in a painful labour, ſighs in expectation of the effect of its adoption, that is, of being delivered from its body and this

world, the root of all the evil it ſuffers: Hence that hour, when its deliverer ſhall come, though otherwiſe attended with circumſtances of terror, is very deſirable, through that hope it repoſes in his infinite mercy and goodneſs, who is his redeemer, who having already paid the ranſom, for its being freed from the power of ſin, has promiſed (and he is faithful to his promiſe) not to let thoſe periſh, who are not in love with their ſlavery.

This is the character of the choſen of God, thus fearful of the dangers, and tired with the aſſaults and uſurpation of ſin, to deſire that moment, which ſhall deſtroy its tyranny, and be a new birth in bringing them forth to a new and better life. But this ſtate being imperfect, this deſire is ſo too, being as yet the firſt fruits of the Spirit, and only the beginning of that perfect effuſion, which ſhall be conſummated in the other life. If I deſire therefore to be delivered from this body of ſin, and enter into the liberty of the children of God, I know this deſire is mixed, through my great weakneſs, and I have but too much reaſon to ſigh, that being clogged with this weight of corruption, I ſigh no more for that glorious liberty. O God, do thou manifeſt thy-

ſelf daily more and more to me, that being ſtill more ſenſible of the evils of this baniſhment, my deſires of being delivered may daily increaſe, that I may ſigh and groan with the ſighs of this Apoſtle, till the hour of being diſſolved ſhall open me a way into thy preſence, where my joys ſhall be unmixed in the poſſeſſion of thee, the only perfect and everlaſting good. O perfect redemption! O full and entire adoption; O conſummate effuſion of the Holy Spirit! when wilt thou be accompliſhed in me?

Theſe deſires are the happy breathings of thoſe ſouls, who are effectually moved by the divine Spirit, who giving them a true knowledge of all the dangers and evils of ſin, to which they are here expoſed, makes them earneſtly long for their port of ſecurity and reſt. How unhappy then is the condition of all thoſe, who being in love with their captivity, ſtudy daily to render it more amiable, and not reſenting the vanity and evils, to which they are ſubject, by their folly and ſenſuality, are ever increaſing and multiplying the dangers of their pilgrimage; and hence have nothing more terrible to them, than the thought of that hour, when they ſhall, I do not ſay, be delivered

from their trouble, but violently torn from what they moſt love! This, I fear, is the too general misfortune of chriſtians, who not conſidering, that not only their own hearts are ſubject to corruption, but that all creatures, in their kind, are ſubject to vanity (not willing, in becoming the inſtruments of ſin) take no care to retrench the uſe of them, as much as may be, by keeping within the bounds of neceſſity and decency; but to ſatisfy their curioſity, their vanity, and other ways to pleaſe their ſenſual part, expoſe themſelves a thouſand ways to be poiſoned by them, ſeek temptations, which in their prayers they ſeemingly deſire to avoid; and thus daily encreaſe the difficulties of ſalvation, in removing themſelves at a greater diſtance from God: For certainly the world, and all creatures, being ſubject to ſuch variety of corruption, the engagement and love of theſe can never be improved but by diminiſhing the love of God: For if the holy *a Kempis* experienced, that he ſcarce went abroad, but he returned home worſe; it cannot be expected, but that, as far as others expoſe themſelves more than he did, they muſt ſtill find more pernicious effects of their raſhneſs. For though we may have grounds to hope,

that Almighty God will prevent theſe ill conſequences in thoſe, who make no farther uſe of creatures, than neceſſity or their duty requires, eſpecially upon their conſtant and humble recommendation of themſelves to his protection: Yet, who has aſſured us he will do the ſame, when without neceſſity or other reaſon, beſides gratifying the importunity of our own appetites, we indiſcreetly, but voluntarily, put ourſelves in hazard? And therefore, though the life of the ancient hermits, who hiding themſelves in deſerts, cut off at once all the dangers of creatures and the world, as much as was poſſible, was a particular call; yet I cannot but think, it a general call to all chriſtians, to be hermits or recluſes, as far as the circumſtances of their ſtate will bear: For ſince the world is wicked, its converſation generally corrupt, its divertiſements very vain and dangerous, and every one is bound to avoid whatever is likely to hazard his eternal lot; therefore ought every one, as far as is conſiſtent with his ſtate, to retrench as many particulars, as he finds to be any conſiderable increaſe of his danger: For ſince father, and mother, and land are to be forſaken, when they become a hinderance to our everlaſting good; what

can there be, after this, that is not to be abandoned on the ſame account? This is a renouncing the world, and a ſelf-denial, which makes up, not only the hermit, but the chriſtian; and he that thinks to be one without it, may be one at large, but, I think, not a goſpel one; and how unſafe, as to eternity, I leave him to conſider.

The conſideration of theſe dangers, from the unneceſſary uſe of creatures, without any other reaſon, moves many chriſtians to avoid plays, balls, and public ſhews, as alſo thoſe repeated gazings in the park and ſtreets, as knowing the devil takes the advantage of theſe vain curioſities, for conveying his poiſon into ſouls, and that theſe being thus the inſtruments of his malice, ought ever to be ſuſpected by them. It is the ſame as to reading romances, and other books of entertainment or error, as likewiſe in the greateſt part of converſation and diſcourſe: For all theſe being generally the mutual communication of infirmities, of pride, and all manner of paſſions, and helping either to ſoften the heart, or amuſe the ſpirit, and moſt certainly to diſtract the thoughts in all manner of chriſtian duties; therefore, thoſe that regard their ſalvation in

earneſt, are very careful in avoiding, or at leaſt, in the choice of them; the ſenſe of that vanity, and thoſe dangers to which they are ſubject againſt their wills, ever making them very cautious not to increaſe them by choice. Thus the principles of chriſtianity lead even thoſe that live in the world, to ſome degrees of the recluſe; and for this end, is retirement and ſolitarineſs recommended by the holy *a Kempis* and S. *Francis Sales*, not ſo as to decline all company or recreation, but to admit of them, without being in love with them; to admit them as far as civility, buſineſs, and a moderate diverſion ſhall require, as far as they may be a help, and not the hazard or ruin of our ſouls. But thou muſt be our Director, O God, in this point, to carry us on betwixt all extremes, ſo as not to be moroſe and ſcrupulous on the one ſide, nor yet indiſcreet or raſh on the other. Thou haſt made every creature for our uſe and aſſiſtance in this life; but while we ſeek help in thy bleſſings, the devil maliciouſly endeavours to turn all into curſes; ſpurring us ever forward to the abuſe of thy gifts; ſo that we are often poiſoned by thoſe very things, which thou haſt ordained for our preſervatives and life. Thus,

againſt their will, the creatures are our misfortune; and it is only thy heavenly wiſdom can ſecure us: Protect us then, O God, againſt all the unavoidable difficulties we are to meet with; and may we never more to be ſo blind to our own eternal intereſt, as by our follies to increaſe the dangers of our ſalvation.

Fourth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke v. 1. Ends verſe 11.

THE Multitude preſſed upon Jeſus to hear the Word of God. It was a good ſign in this people, to be thus earneſt in following Chriſt, to hear from him the doctrine of ſalvation. Souls quickened with the love of God, and the deſire of a better life, are carried there with eagerneſs, where they have hopes of being informed or helped on in their way. Salvation is their great buſineſs, and the ſolicitude of obtaining it, is as great a ſpur to them, in ſeeking what may contribute towards it, as the love of gain is to the huſbandman or merchant, in drawing them, where they have the encouragement of making a good market. Where this earneſtneſs is not found in chriſtians, they have reaſon to ſuſpect themſelves, as not being ſincere and hearty in what they profeſs; and to be jealous, that, while they pretend to

Heaven, it is not this, but ſomething elſe is their buſineſs.

As for ſuch therefore, as are little concerned in hearing or reading what is good, or in meeting with thoſe perſons, whom they know beſt qualified for giving them help; and are ſo far from improving the opportunities that offer, as induſtriouſly to decline them, or let every inclination, or trifle, or even ſloth, put them by thoſe exerciſes, which would ſo much contribute to the giving them life, or light, in the affairs of their ſouls; I cannot but apprehend their ſtate to be dangerous, and that there is but little or no life in them, where the actions of life do not appear. Let theſe be their own judges, in taking meaſure of themſelves from other proportioned circumſtances of human life. Can they think thoſe ſick perſons to be deſirous of health, who are not ſolicitous for what may be their cure? Are thoſe very hungry, who neither ſeek nor accept good meat, that is offered? Are thoſe travellers much bent upon their journey's end, who make no enquiry, and avoid ſuch as would ſhew them the way? This indifferency is as evident as demonſtration, in diſcovering the diſpoſition and inward ſentiments of ſuch perſons: And may not theſe, from

ſuch obvious obſervations, make ſome judgment of themſelves? For do not they know their ſouls are in great diſorder, and ſubject to many diſtempers? is there not a weakneſs upon them, ſuch as requires wholſome food for recovering due ſtrength of mind? Are not they upon a journey, in which they may eaſily miſtake the way, and a miſcarriage is of no leſs than an eternal conſequence? And have not they ſenſe to know, that hearing good inſtructions, reading ſpiritual books, diſcourſing with perſons of known experience, charity, and zeal, is both medicinal for the cure of their diſtempers, nouriſhing for regaining ſtrength, and directive for pointing out their way? And what then muſt be the concluſion, upon their neglecting theſe ordinary means, which God has made eaſy to them, and mercifully ordained for their help? Is it not plain, that both the health and ſtrength of ſoul, and coming at length ſafe to heaven, is not their concern, that this is not their buſineſs, that they are contented under their miſery and darkneſs, and deſire no relief? The caſe ſeems ſo evident, that, I think, there needs no more than the general obſervation of ſuch neglect, to lament the great unhappineſs of ſuch per-

ſons, as not having the love of God in them, or a vigorous deſire of being ſaved.

But however, though this be ſo dangerous a ſymptom; yet I cannot flatter thoſe with any promiſes of ſecurity, who being not ſubject to this neglect, are zealous in the means and exerciſes here recommended: Becauſe there is a ſort of zeal which is very barren; and as we ſee this people of the *Jews*, who were ever preſſing in crowds upon Jeſus Chriſt, and yet continued almoſt all in their blindneſs and infidelity, ſo it may eaſily be with chriſtians; they may diſtinguiſh themſelves by a remarkable eagerneſs and heat; they may be conſtant in the church, they may preſs cloſe upon an admired conductor, and contenting themſelves with this external ſingularity, be wholly careleſs as to the interior, and in bringing forth fruit anſwerable to the promiſes of their commendable zeal. What therefore are our heats, what our eagerneſs, what our zeal! They are all to be ſuſpected, if the works appear not, or, at leaſt, if they are not accompanied with watchful and induſtrious endeavours for overcoming evil, and approaching to the life of Chriſt. And can this be ſaid with truth of all; ſince

of thoſe, who are under the cover of ſanctity, ſo many are hypocrites, ſo many have intereſt in their eye, ſo many court the reputation of holineſs, ſo many are carried on by curioſity, vanity, and humour, ſo many by cuſtom? And is it not the remarkable irregularity, if not iniquity, of ſome of theſe, notorious for their diſſimulation, lying, detracting, whiſpering, animoſities, malice, envy, and even cheating, which has brought a profeſſed ſanctity into that diſrepute, that it is generally ſuſpected by the obſervers, as an expedient taken up for ſome worldly deſign, for the effecting it with more ſecurity?

There has been ſo much of this amongſt chriſtians, that, it is plain, the beſt exerciſes are abuſed, and that there can be no dependence on the moſt conſtant practice of them, except it be accompanied with the endeavours of a ſincere heart, excluding the world in what it does, and deſiring nothing, but to know and love God, and to be ſkilled in the ways that lead to him. If theſe be not the conditions of ſuch, as undertake to follow Chriſt, they will do like St. *Peter* here, and his companions, labour all night, and take nothing. Thus, it muſt be confeſſed,

all thoſe do above-mentioned; they work in the night, becauſe they propoſe nothing above this world, and take not Chriſt with them, who is the true light, and when they have thus laboured many years, what have they taken? If they have gained reputation with men, or otherwiſe proſpered in their vile deſigns, when the nets are drawn up, it will all appear to be nothing, or rather worſe than nothing, in finding the fruit of their labours, to be their own judgment, for having unworthily ſubjected heaven to earth, and abuſed the things of God, for ſeeking glory with men.

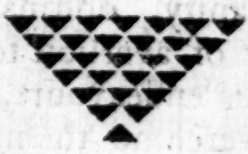
The ſure method then for rendering all exerciſes of piety fruitful, and making them the arguments of true diſciples, is to follow St. *Peter* in the ſecond caſting of his net; *In verbo tuo laxabo rete: Lord, in thy word I will let go the net.* He had taken nothing all the night; but now, upon Chriſt's command, and depending on his bleſſing, he tries again, and his faith is rewarded by a wonderful ſucceſs. In this manner all chriſtians ought to undertake whatever they do; the word of Chriſt is to be the ſubject of their confidence; and though they are to be induſtrious, yet they are not to depend on their

labour, but on the order and bleſſing of heaven: Thus in reading and praying, and in the performance of other ſpiritual duties they are to put earth out of ſight, and ſhutting their eyes againſt all that is human, are to regard only the orders of heaven, preſcribing theſe exerciſes, as the means for obtaining light and grace; they are to reſt all their hopes of ſucceſs on the power and goodneſs of God; and thus beginning, and going on with the diſpoſitions of humility, ſincerity, and faith, they will be out of danger of abuſing what is holy, and will not fail of the fruits of their labour.

If this ſame were the method of chriſtians in all temporal buſineſs, ſo as to undertake nothing, but according to the order of Chriſt, that is, what is lawful and juſt, and ſtand with reſolution againſt thoſe ſiniſter motives of covetouſneſs, ambition, and a worldly ſpirit, and daily beſeech God to bleſs their endeavours; how might they thus join heaven and earth together, and even then lay up treaſures in heaven, while they are providing for the ſubſiſtence of a ſhort life! Obtain, O Jeſus, this ſpirit for all thy faithful, make them zealous in every duty; teach them to ſeek thee, but with

ſuch

ſuch ſincerity, that they may not proſtitute holy things to the ſervice of their own corruption; teach them to depend with an entire confidence on thee, that beginning all in thy name, and reſting on thy bleſſing, they may thus find the fruit of their labours, both for this life, and a better to come.



Fifth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Pet.* iii. 8. Ends verſe 15.

SANCTIFY *Chriſt our Lord in your hearts.* The duty of all Chriſtians is to work ſuch a change in the inward man, that whereas they bring with them into the world nothing but corruption, inclinations to folly and vanity, obſtinacy and ſelf-love, and a ſort of averſion to good; they may, by laborious endeavours, and the help of grace, ſo overcome themſelves, as to have a true value for no other goods but thoſe of the Goſpel, deſire no other ſatisfaction more than that of a good conſcience, and aim at the practice of nothing more earneſtly than that life, which Chriſt recommended and practiſed; and that is, to have their deſires, affections, and will, wholly regulated by him; and this is truly to put on [illegible] as the apoſtle here commands, [illegible] their hearts. For as a

Chriſt, [illegible]
to ſanctify him [illegible]

corrupt heart in practice eſteems nothing but what is like itſelf, corrupt; finds no reliſh in any thing but what is ſenſual and worldly; and therefore may be truly ſaid to be unhappily conſecrated to the world; this being what, above all, it ſeeks reſt in, admires and adores, and thus becomes idolatrous: So what a Chriſtian heart, however naturally perverſe, yet above all eſteems, ſeeks, and labours for, is the law, life, and love of Chriſt: This is the treaſure it deſires to purchaſe, this is its only valuable good, this is the end of its religion, and it knows no other ſatisfaction but in this. To ſuch a ſoul Chriſt is the only ſolid truth, Chriſt is the only ſubſtantial life, Chriſt is the only ſafe and unerring way; as far as it departs from him, ſo much it forſakes of truth, it loſes of life, and goes out of its way: And therefore to prevent all ſuch miſcarriages, it ſtill endeavours to keep an eye upon him, by this rule endeavours to walk, and on this lays the ground of its future happineſs.

But now as to the particulars, in which it deſires to follow this divine original, the principal are, in this day's leſſon, ſet down by St *Peter*: 1. In keeping a perfect peace and union with all neighbours, friends, and enemies. 2. In having compaſſion on the neceſſities of others. 3. In

maintaining a brotherly love. 4 In being merciful, by not exaggerating, but excuſing others faults. 5. In modeſty. 6. In humility. 7. In not rendering evil for evil; but bleſſing for curſing. 8. In avoiding all evil ſpeaking, detraction, lying, and deceit. 9. In declining ſin, and doing good. 10. In eſteeming it a bleſſing to ſuffer for juſtice. 11. In not fearing the evils of this world. In theſe particulars the true Chriſtian thinks himſelf obliged to come as near his divine Maſter as poſſibly he can, as knowing this to be the only way of ſerving God in ſpirit and truth; and that whatever character a man may have in the world, however he may have gained the opinion of holineſs, yet before God he cannot be truly holy, if in theſe points he voluntarily, negligently, or affectedly leaves the Goſpel, and departs from his Maſter; for in this he does not follow, but indeed forſakes God.

And becauſe all theſe accompliſhments, as likewiſe the whole ſyſtem of the Goſpel, may be reduced to this one point of an *humble charity*, therefore the good Chriſtian ſeriouſly applies himſelf to the conſideration of this, as it was practiſed by Chriſt our Lord, and having framed, not an imperfect, but a true idea of it, he, by this, endeavours to direct his life, his thoughts, his words,

his actions; and thus only hopes truly to ſanctify him in his heart. And though he finds the method of the world, with the violence of a torrent, carrying him quite another way, yet knowing the world to be contrary to Chriſt, he values not its authority, regards not its precedents, however confirmed by number, power, and cuſtom; but taking Chriſt to be his guide, he generally concludes himſelf ſo much nearer him, the farther he departs from what the world commends.

Hence, for the regulating himſelf, he firſt conſiders Chriſt, as to his words, and the common ſubject of his diſcourſe; and here he finds his whole deſign was for the benefit of others, to inform them, in what conſiſted their only happineſs and moſt ſubſtantial good; it was to expoſe the vanity of worldly goods, of ambition, of pride, of hypocriſy, and the love of pleaſure; it was to eſtabliſh the worſhip, the love, and fear of God, humility, patience, ſelf-denial, and diſengagement from the world. There was nothing ever heard in his diſcourſe of curioſity, or that could draw the hearts of his hearers to things of this world. He knew all things paſt, preſent, and to come, comprehended the ſecrets of nature, of ſciences, and of arts, and yet was never heard to

mention any thing of this kind; he never inſtructed his apoſtles in any human ſcience, nor explicated to them any difficulties of ſcripture relating to earthly things, ſuch as are the ſubject of the curious. His ſpirit ſeemed wholly taken up with God, with the ſalvation of men, and things of eternity. So that being in this world, his buſineſs was altogether of the other.

2. As to his actions; though he wrought many miracles, neceſſary for the proof of his being the *Meſſias*, and for fulfilling the prophecies; yet all was done in ſuch a manner as was free from oſtentation; nothing reſembling the grandeur or pomp of the world; avoiding courts, ſeeking the poor and diſtreſſed, and generally preaching to them. His life was a life of fatigue and labour, always employed in his function. His only aim in all he did, was to perform the will of God: For this he came into the world; this, he ſays, was his food and nouriſhment, *Cibus meus*. This he did always: *Quæ placita ſunt ei, facio ſemper*. And having performed this, he ceaſed to live: *All is finiſhed*, ſays he, *and he gave up the ghoſt*.

3. As to the choice of things of this world, and to which he gave preference, it is evident he preferred poverty before

riches, humiliation and abjection before ſtate and magnificence; the avoiding the pleaſures of this world before the enjoyment of them: And his choice being not mixed with neceſſity or force, but wholly voluntary, and without any poſſibility of miſtake, being himſelf the infinite wiſdom and ſovereign truth; hence it is a conſequence unqueſtionable, that the privation of theſe worldly things is in itſelf better than the poſſeſſion of them.

4. As to his ſufferings; he finds, that though his principal end was to ſatisfy the divine juſtice for the ſins of men; yet, beſides this, it was to give us example to let no human terror force us from our duty, but amidſt all difficulties, ever to maintain the intereſt of juſtice and truth; it was to convince us that innocence is no ſecurity againſt ſuffering in this life: And that we might not be diſcouraged when brought to the trial, therefore Jeſus, innocent, puts himſelf at the head of all that are thus to ſuffer, and ſays to them, *Follow me.*

In this manner, the true Chriſtian contemplates the humble charity of Jeſus, that is, his infinite love both to God and man, accompanied with a moſt perfect, profound, and entire humility, in the practice of all thoſe particulars here recommended to us

by St. *Peter;* from this original he frames in his ſoul the beſt idea of Chriſtianity; and though he diſcovers in it a perfection far above all he can pretend to practiſe; yet he is very careful not to let the deſires, the fancies, the corruption of ſuch miſerable creatures as we are, ſo alter his judgment as to approve any method of a Chriſtian life contrary to this, or to efface thoſe truths he has thus received from the example and life of Chriſt: By theſe he regulates his eſteem and diſeſteem of worldly things; by theſe he hopes to ſanctify Chriſt in his heart. It is he is the light of the world, and not the world to itſelf. He deſires to keep as cloſe to this light as the infirmity and unhappy circumſtances of his life will permit; and whenever he departs from it, it is from thee, O Jeſus, who knoweſt all his weakneſs, he hopes for pardon and mercy. For as thou art the light to guide, ſo thou art mercy to forgive.

Fifth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Mat. v. 20. Ends verſe 24.

IF your juſtice exceeds not that of the Scribes and Phariſees, you ſhall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. The taſk here propoſed to Chriſtians, of exceeding the juſtice of the Phariſees, ſeems not very great, if we judge of the Phariſees from the impreſſions made by thoſe reproachful characters with which they are generally charged in the goſpel; for theſe have ſomething ſo very black in them, that the condition of being better than they has no appearance of difficulty in it. But if we examine the Phariſees more in retail, we ſhall find the taſk growing upon our hands, and that it is much eaſier falling ſhort than going beyond them. For to give them their due, it is not obſerved that Chriſt any where reproaches them with any open breach of the commandments, either with perjury, adultery, murder, theft, or breaking of the ſabbath; they were exact

even to niceneſs, in obſerving the law of *Moſes:* They were conſtant in prayer; faſted twice every week; they were zealous in oppoſing errors, and converting Infidels to the true religion; all this is acknowledged of them in the Goſpel: And are not here ſo many commendable qualities, that whoever now ſhould live up to them, would be eſteemed a good Chriſtian? And yet it is declared here by Truth itſelf, that whoever exceeds not the juſtice of the Phariſees ſhall not come into the kingdom of heaven.

The Chriſtian then muſt not be wanting in any commendable quality found in the Phariſees, and one condition of ſalvation being to outgo them, he muſt ſee what was wanting in them, that ſo he may be ſenſible how to level his endeavours. And this he may comprehend, by obſerving what are the particulars of which they are reproached by Chriſt. The principal one is, that they eſteemed all virtue to conſiſt in the outward obſervation of the precepts, without being concerned what paſſed in the heart; hence the deſires of revenge, covetouſneſs, uncleanneſs, envy, &c. gave them no occaſion of ſcruple, ſo they committed not the outward actions; and thus their watch was upon their hands, and not on the heart. This is often charged upon them by Chriſt,

who compares them to ſepulchres, beautified without, but within full of corruption; and reproaches them for cleaning the outſide of their veſſels, without regarding what was within.

This miſtaken notion of virtue was neceſſarily followed with a confidence in themſelves, and a preſumption of their own ſanctity; becauſe their outward actions being viſible and certain, they had, upon this falſe ground, no reaſon to doubt of it. Hence they knew nothing of interior humility or fear (as having nothing to ſuſpect in themſelves as evil), and appeared boldly before God; and hence they had a contempt for all others, who did not come up to their external exactneſs in every point; and thus giving themſelves the preference, expected the ſame from others as what was their due.

Theſe are ſome principal points in which the Phariſees failed; ſo that while they were moſt virtuous in appearance amongſt the Jews, they are yet condemned as the moſt criminal amongſt them. Hence may the Chriſtian learn what his obligation is; and firſt, muſt ſet down this for a principle, That however he may be exempt from all outward crimes, yet, upon this, he has no aſſurance, but he may be worſe in the ſight

of God than the moſt notorious ſinners; becauſe he knows not the meaſure of his interior pride or ingratitude. Not that God will impute to him theſe evils as long as they are involuntary; yet ſince he cannot with aſſurance diſtinguiſh what is the principle of his actions, or to what point his thoughts and deſires are voluntary or involuntary, he cannot be certain whether that which ſeems good in him be real or falſe, chriſtian or phariſaical. In this he ſees the foundation of preſumption, confidence, and ſelf-eſteem, quite taken away; as likewiſe of all contempt of others who ſeem not ſo regular as himſelf, and a ſure ground laid for a perpetual humiliation and fear.

Secondly, He ſees the neceſſity of keeping a ſtrict watch upon the inward man, for that in the heart is the root of all evil; and thoſe ſpiritual vices, which are not diſcernable to the eye, are as deteſtable before God as the more notorious ſins; and the more dangerous, becauſe the objects are continual, their obſtacles are leſs, and their aſpect not ſo foul.

Thirdly, Since the very inſtance mentioned here by Chriſt, in which the Chriſtian is to exceed the Phariſees, is that of anger, hatred, or revenge againſt his brother; he ſees a neceſſity for being particularly nice in

this point, and that he is not only to obſerve the letter of the law, in not killing, but likewiſe be watchful againſt the ſeemingly inconſiderable diſpoſitions that lead towards it; for that God will not judge hatred by the outward effects, but condemns it in itſelf when no ſuch effects appear. Whilſt therefore the Phariſee thinks himſelf innocent, as long as he dyes not his hands in his neighbour's blood; the Chriſtian muſt take his direction from Chriſt's mouth, who here declares in this Goſpel, that whoever is angry with his brother is guilty of ſin, and that God will puniſh him more ſeverely than ordinary crimes were puniſhed amongſt the Jews; that if anger breaks forth into reproachful words, its judgment ſhall be ſtill more rigorous; but if it comes once to a formed hatred, ſo as to purpoſe the ruin of others reputation by ſuch injurious attempts, as was that of calling *fool* amongſt the Jews, this ſhall be chaſtiſed with hell-fire.

If this be the character Chriſt gives of this ſin, and expreſsly requires Chriſtians in this point to outdo the Phariſees, and upon want of compliance cuts them off from the hopes of ſalvation, ought it not to be the ſubject of their daily care to avoid this evil, and chuſe rather to ſubmit with patience to the common provocations of it, than by ſa-

tisfying a peeviſh or angry humour, to draw upon themſelves a much greater miſchief than what they ſo much reſent from their neighbour's hands? It is certainly an unreaſonable paſſion, which complaining of one evil, ſeeks remedy by running into greater. And yet, unreaſonable as it is, and ſentenced with ſuch a heavy doom as here pronounced, is not however the practice of it as common among Chriſtians, as if it were recommended by reaſon, and had the promiſes of faith to encourage it? If we open but our ears to the world, what is the noiſe, but of clamour, paſſion, diſſenſion, and revenge? And if better education, or the profeſſion of piety, gives a check to the tumultuous part, is there not ſtill ſuch management as to keep up the bitterneſs of paſſion without the noiſe? O God, I cannot but lament the miſery of Chriſtians in this point, who let every ordinary provocation, and even groundleſs jealouſies, be enough to exaſperate them againſt their brother; and having variety of colours wherewith to diſguiſe their paſſion, ſhew their art in making themſelves unhappy, by nouriſhing gall within their breaſts inſtead of that charity which thou exacteſt from them. Thou haſt ſhewn ſufficiently thy averſion to this evil, in requiring thoſe who offend their

neighbour, to go forthwith and make their their peace with him; poſitively declaring thou wilt hear no prayers, nor receive any offering from their hands, till they are reconciled with him. Thus thou endeavoureſt to prevent or heal all wounds of paſſion; and ſheweſt that none can have any intereſt or help in thee, but by keeping peace with their neighbour, and yet neither thy commands nor threats prevail; but there is ſtill as little charity among the believers as if they believed not; where then is their faith, where their love or fear of thee? Remedy this evil, O God, we beſeech thee, and permit not Chriſtians to be worſe than Phariſees, while they are ſo ſtrictly joined to be better. Give to all a ſenſe of their duty; make them underſtand how miſerable they are, in ſhutting heaven againſt themſelves; teach them to be patient and meek, that they may not be eternally confounded with the folly of having taken revenge of themſelves for the injuries they reſented as received from others.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. vi. 3. Ends verſe 11.

CONSIDER *yourſelves dead to ſin, and alive to God in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord.* Beſides the general tribute of death to be paid by all that are born into this world, there is another death peculiar to Chriſtians, without which they cannot be alive in Chriſt. For as there is no ariſing to a life eternal, without dying firſt; ſo there can be no true living in Chriſt, even in this world, without coming to it by death, and that is the death here mentioned by the apoſtle, *to wit*, the dying to ſin. This death is begun in baptiſm, by which, as St *Paul* here ſays, *we are buried together with Chriſt*, not only by being covered with the water of the font to repreſent his death, but alſo to ſhew our own dying to the corruption of *Adam*, which we there renounce, as to all its ſinful effects, and promiſe to conſummate this death, by renouncing the ſame, in fulfilling the promiſes there made, all our lives; and whoever is ſo unhappy, as to live in the total forgetfulneſs of thoſe engagements, ſeek-

ing thoſe very corruptions to which they ſolemnly promiſed to die, ſuch may flatter themſelves with the name of Chriſtian, but are really as far from the truth of being ſo, as they are from being faithful to the contract there ſealed in the preſence of God and his church. For when a perſon, to become a Chriſtian, abjures all correſpondence with the enemies of his ſoul, he can no longer be eſteemed to live a Chriſtian, than he fulfils the conditions, upon which he was admitted; and if afterwards, either by words or actions, he has any communication with the things he has renounced, he betrays his truſt, is unfaithful in his allegiance, revokes his word given to God, and as *Tertullian* ſays, abjures in fact the name of Chriſtian, and breaks the ſeal. *Chriſtianum nomen ejuramus, & reſcindimus ſignaculum.*

Conſidering then the promiſe we make at the font; firſt of renouncing the devil, in avoiding him and all his ſnares: Secondly of hating the world, in avoiding its pomps and dangerous liberties: Thirdly in deteſting all ſuch works as are the violation of God's law, it is very evident, how a Chriſtian ought to conſider himſelf dead in this life, ſince he ought to be ſo armed with a kind of hardneſs and almoſt inſenſibility, in regard of the things of this world, that like one

dead, he may receive little or no impreſſion from whatever is delightful in it, and abide unmoved amidſt all its charms; ſo that as motion is an argument of life; ſo he, by his not moving, may ground ſome hopes of his being dead, as the apoſtle requires. It is thus they ought to be, when curioſity and vanity call upon him; when temptations and ill company ſolicit him; when the provocations of contempt or injuſtice preſs on him; when the thoughts of eaſe or honour court him. For as the having the eyes, ears and heart open to ſuch incitements of paſſion and ſenſe, is a ſign of a ſenſual life prevailing in ſuch a ſoul, while in its motions and actions it depends on the impreſſion of ſuch ſenſible and corrupt objects: So truly, there can be no better argument of this Chriſtian death here required, than upon the violent and repeated provocations of the ſame objects, to abide wholly obſtinate (and in ſome manner unmoved) againſt them. Not that it can be expected, as long as we have our ſenſes and ſenſible faculties, not to feel ſome ſudden and ſurpriſing ſatisfactions and averſions; for theſe being natural, cannot poſſibly be prevented, till the happy change of our ſtate ſhall deliver us from this corruption: But that a ſoul hold ſo far the dominion in its own will, as never voluntarily to

entertain, or act upon ſuch impreſſions; for the life of the ſoul being in the will, as long as this yields not, but remains unmoved, ſo long may a ſoul be properly ſaid to be without motion, and conſequently morally dead.

This moral death, in regard of all that is ſinful or evidently dangerous, the good Chriſtian ever labours to preſerve, becauſe in this conſiſts the fulfilling the contract made with Almighty God at his baptiſm: Without this, he knows he is falſe to his promiſe, he is faithleſs and unjuſt: And therefore upon the firſt ſuggeſtion of all that belongs to the ſinful pomps of the world, the works of the fleſh and the devil, he ever anſwers with that firſt word he ſpoke by his godfather at the font, *I renounce you:* I have liſted myſelf under Chriſt's ſtandard; I there engaged my word and my faith to have no commerce with his enemies; I muſt be true to this promiſe; for otherwiſe I forfeit all right to the Chriſtian name, and to that eternal inheritance, which God has prepared for thoſe that ſerve him. I ſee by the Goſpel that thoſe that are received into bliſs, are welcomed under that character of *good and faithful ſervants: Euge ſerve bone et fidelis.* If then I be not faithful, what can I expect, but to be caſt out into utter dark-

neſs? If I firſt abjure the pomps of the world, and afterwards ſeek them, run after them, and am in love with them: If I renounce the devil, and afterwards enter into league with him and ſerve him: If I declare ſolemnly againſt all his works, and then give a pleaſing ear to his ſuggeſtions, follow his motions, engage in his cauſe againſt the law of God, encourage others to take part with him by my words and example: If I promote what is dangerous, encourage all that is enſnaring and ſinful; what is this but treachery and infidelity? And what reward can I expect of the faithful ſervant, if thus, in the general courſe of my life, I am falſe and unfaithful? I know if a ſervant ſhould prove thus faithleſs in my houſe, in wholly neglecting the concern he had undertaken, and contemning my commands; I ſhould not regard him as my ſervant, but turn him out of doors: If a ſoldier ſhould liſt himſelf, and afterwards be found betraying his ſovereign to an enemy, he would not only loſe his pay, but ſuffer as a traitor: This I know;—and will not this be my doom, if having ſolemnly contracted with my God, I ſerve not him, but the world and the devil? Except I think him blind, that he ſees not what I do, or unjuſt in being the rewarder of evil.

If then I think to be what I have undertaken and profeſs, I muſt live dead to ſin and the world, as I have engaged at my baptiſm; I muſt ever renounce what I have there once renounced; the rule and meaſure of my whole life muſt be the proteſtations I there made; and that is, to be deaf, blind, dumb, and inſenſible, in regard of all that is corruption, and endeavour to be alive only to God in Chriſt, to live by the Spirit of Chriſt, and thus to acquit myſelf of the obligations I undertook at the font, by a life of innocence and holineſs in relation to God; of charity and love in regard of my neighbour; and of mortification and penance, as to myſelf. This is not the *life* of the world, but it is the *life* of Chriſt: That I have abjured; this I have undertaken: Finiſh in me, O God, by thy holy Spirit, what I have begun through thy grace; grant that I may be dead to ſin, and as I have promiſed, to be alive only to Thee.

Sixth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Mark viii. 1. Ends verſe 9.

I *Have compaſſion on the multitude.* They are the words of Chriſt, ſeeing the people abiding with him three days in the deſert, unprovided of all things neceſſary for their ſubſiſtence; and therefore turning to his diſciples, he ſays, *I have compaſſion on the multitude; for behold it is now three days they abide with me, having nothing to eat; and if I ſend them away faſting, they will faint in the way.* This was the condition of this people; and ſince we ſee it raiſed compaſſion in Chriſt for their relief, may not all pious ſouls here juſtly hope, the ſame bowels will be moved upon them?

If theſe weigh the circumſtances in which they are in this life, they will find themſelves as much unprovided as this people in the deſert; for is not heaven their home, and the place to which they are to go? And what is their diſtance from it? They cannot but be ſenſible their ſins divide them from

God, and according to the number and weight of their ſins, ſo are they removed at a diſtance from heaven. How great then is this diſtance? The people here mentioned were not three days journey from home: Can Chriſtians ſay ſo of themſelves? Let them but reflect how many years they have been running from God, and then gueſs how far they are from him, and whether their return be not rather a journey of years than days. Then, if they conſider the place in which they are, they will find it falling ſhort in nothing of the horror of a deſert: For what kind of horror can there be, which they have not before them? Precipices, and quick-ſands, and torrents are on every ſide; ſuch are all the vicious practices, which have authority and cuſtom to recommend them; and yet their danger is ſuch, that whoever unhappily falls into them, ſtands in need almoſt of a miracle to prevent his ſinking, or being carried into hell. As for wild beaſts, I believe they may match with all the deſerts in the world put together; for if they look on the fury of men perſecuting one another, with what malice and envy they purſue their neighbour, how they ſeek and rejoice in the oppreſſion and ruin of the innocent; how they lay ſnares for one another in all manner of

buſineſs, ſo that nobody has any confidence of their ſecurity, but from their own induſtry and watchfulneſs; how all things are carried by power and ſtrength! from ſuch a proſpect, of which this is but a glimpſe, it will appear, that what we call the civilized world, is more a deſert of wild beaſts, if unreaſonableneſs, rage, cruelty, and madneſs be the ingredients of them, than any other we call by that name. And if any thing be wanting, let but the interior of Chriſtians be viewed, and there will be found all the deformity that makes up monſters; let their method be obſerved of communicating their poiſon, and drawing one another into ſin, and there will appear the venom of aſps and baſiliſks; let their practice be conſidered of helping to damn one another; and if it be well looked into, that this is not only the buſineſs of ſtrangers, but of friends to friends, of relations to relations, nay, even of parents often to the children of their own bowels; and that in this is their greateſt paſtime and divertiſements, nay, the ſubject of boaſts and glory; and it muſt be confeſſed, that Chriſtians, in cruelty and barbarity, out-do the beaſts of prey, and may juſtly be characterized, not only as wild beaſts, but devils.

Thus has the believing world all the characters

characters of a deſert; and while the beſt of Chriſtians live in this deſert, they have no other ſecurity, but like thoſe who travel amongſt wild beaſts, by going always armed, and ſtanding upon their defence. And what have they for the ſupport and nouriſhment of their ſpiritual life? This deſert affords no food whereon to ſubſiſt; all that is in it is venomous, conveying poiſon into their ſouls; all is the food of pride, ſenſuality, ambition, covetouſneſs and luxury; ſo that if they are not ever upon the guard, in caſe of their eſcaping others cruelty, their ruin will be from themſelves.

This is the true ſtate of all Chriſtians in this world, and this the reaſon of many walling themſelves up againſt it, and of others chooſing to live rather amongſt beaſts than men. Now, if miſery be a motive of compaſſion, and a general unhappineſs touches the bowels of mercy; may not this miſery of Chriſtians be as ſtrong a plea as that of the people mentioned in this deſert? And may not Chriſtians hence ground their hopes, that He, who compaſſionating the multitude in the deſert, provided them with neceſſaries for preſent ſubſiſtence, and to carry them home, will likewiſe commiſerate them in their unhappineſs, and let the effects of his mercy appear in the relief of their

wants, and for their ſecurity amidſt the terrors with which they are encompaſſed? One thing is certain, that without his help we ſhall not be able to finiſh our journey, and that if he lets us go faſting, we ſhall faint in the way; and ſince this diſtreſs of the people then moved him to work a miracle in their favour, why may not we depend on the ſame goodneſs for our help?

No queſtion we may; but then, ſuch as deſire it, ought to learn from this people, to prepare themſelves for it. Theſe followed him into the deſert; ſo muſt Chriſtians, by the practice of ſuch truths as the world does not underſtand; and therefore are, as it were, deſerted and abandoned by it; they muſt withdraw ſo far from the world, or the diſtracting confuſion of it, as to poſſeſs their own ſouls, to labour in the overcoming their paſſions, to adore, pray, and have their ears and hearts open to Jeſus Chriſt; and what is this, but either wholly to retire from the world, or live ſo in the world, as if they were not in it?

They muſt, like theſe people, ſeek firſt the kingdom of God, who, not ſolicitous for their affairs at home, ſeem wholly bent upon hearing Chriſt, and learning from him the ways of ſalvation. Not that Chriſtians are to neglect their family duties, or thoſe

of their ſtate, but to remember, while they are faithful in theſe, that the buſineſs of heaven be not neglected; but, that as this is the greater concern, ſo it ought to have the greater part of their daily ſolicitude and labour. For if this world has the enclo-ſure of their thoughts and induſtry, and the concern of eternity is generally put by on this account, and as a buſineſs of indifferency to be done, if there be nothing to hinder it, and otherwiſe to be let alone; this is putting heaven to the chance; and ſuch Chriſtians cannot wonder, if they faint in the way, and, for want of ſtrength, are not able to walk in the way of God's command-ments.

They muſt again, like this people, who ſtaid three days in the deſert, not only un-dertake the buſineſs of ſalvation, but be in-duſtrious to perſevere in it. In this work there will be many difficulties, not only from the world, and interior corruption, but likewiſe ſometimes from the hand of God himſelf, who ſends many trials for the exerciſe of humility and patience, and even then ſeems to have no regard to diſtreſſed ſouls, when they think themſelves ready to ſink under the weight of temporal or ſpiri-tual evils. But theſe people, who ſtill kept their eyes upon Chriſt, when they ſaw no-

thing to prevent their periſhing, ſhew what ought to be the fidelity of Chriſtians, and that they are not only to be conſtant in all duties amidſt his bleſſings, and when the ſweetneſs of ſenſible comforts is an invitation to them, but then more faithfully, when they ſeem to themſelves forſaken both by God and man. This is difficult; but this difficulty is the beſt trial of perſeverance, and fidelity here is that which moſt effectually opens the hands of God, and obliges him to the aſſiſtance of ſuch ſouls by miracle, if ordinary means are not ſufficient for them. Chriſt helped not this multitude, till he had firſt made them ſit down upon the earth; and till Chriſtians, by the experience of their own weakneſs and nothing, are humbled in their own eyes, and ſo truly upon the earth, that they have no confidence in themſelves, they are not in a diſpoſition of being fed by Chriſt. The force of unbelievers is from their pride and ambition, which ſpur them on; but the ſtrength of the faithful muſt come from their humility, which caſts them upon the ground.

In this manner are Chriſtians to prepare for the nouriſhment of divine grace: Teach us, O Jeſus, to prepare ourſelves for this heavenly food: For we are ſenſible of the many dangers of this life, and of our great diſtance from heaven; and we know our

weakneſs to be ſuch, that if thou helpeſt us not, we ſhall certainly periſh in the way: Thou hadſt compaſſion on the multitude, have likewiſe compaſſion on us; have regard to our miſery, and turn not thy eyes from us, becauſe we have no help in ourſelves, but only in thee.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. vi. 19. To the end.

AS *you have made your members ſerve uncleanneſs and iniquity,——So make them now ſerve to juſtice for your ſanctification.* This was what St *Paul* exacted from thoſe whom he deſired to be converted to God; and ſince the morality of the Goſpel is as unchangeable as its faith, this ſame muſt be required now, and without it there can be no converſion. They are called *Converts*, who, abjuring the errors in which they have lived, embrace the true faith; but if with the change of their faith they change not their lives too, they are no converts of St *Paul* or the Goſpel, becauſe the Goſpel requires no leſs the one than the other. I am a Convert, ſays one, and he ſhews it in the profeſſion of his faith: I enquire into his life, and find him as ſlothful, as forgetful of God as before; I find him engaged in the ſame corruptions of drinking, of gaming, of ſwearing, of cozening, of frauds,

of neglect of family, of prodigality, of paſſion, or other vicious liberties, as before. And is this to be a Convert? Truly, it is a way of becoming a kind of Catholic, without being a Chriſtian; a way too many take, whilſt upon their converſion, they only conſider what they are to believe; but never ſeriouſly demand of Almighty God, with St *Paul*, *Domine, quid vis ut faciam? Lord, what wilt thou have me do?* In this point, therefore, I think great care ought to be uſed, to inſtruct all beginners, not only in the creed, but likewiſe in all the commandments of God, and moſt particularly in the Spirit of the Goſpel and of Chriſt; to inform them of all the rules of humility, meekneſs, charity, patience, purity, and Chriſtian ſuffering; that ſo their faith and manners may be changed together: And thus giving evidence of their converſion, in the new method of their lives, they may be eſteemed, and truly be, perfect Converts.

But this part, I am told, is reſerved to be the work of their *confeſſion*, and by means of this, the great change of their lives is to be effected. And truly a great change may be expected hence, if they do as they ought; but how can this be, if they are not well informed of the morality and ſpirit of the Goſpel? Without this they cannot diſcover

how they have offended againſt it, or know how to amend and conform their lives to it; for want of this, they are left to learn it from the example of others of the ſame communion, and hence are expoſed to all the principles of thoſe they converſe with, which too often are very different, if not contrary to what the Goſpel teaches; but not eaſily ſuſpected by them, who generally think themſelves ſecure enough, in doing what they ſee others do. And therefore that paſtor, who labours not, by a timely inſtruction, to prevent this miſcarriage in thoſe who commit themſelves to his conduct, ſeems either little ſenſible of the great corruption of the world, authoriſed by common practice and cuſtom, or too little concerned for their ſouls and his own, in letting them run the hazard of being taught their duty by example. And though ſuch, who having the opportunity, take pains, by weekly exhortations and catechiſing, to inſtruct their flock in all moral duties, are not wanting to this important obligation; yet what can their plea be, who perform nothing of this part of their function, and uſe no other means to ſupply it? Will not all the ignorance, with all its criminal conſequences, in as many ſouls as are under their care, be one day charged upon them?

Let the point here mentioned by St *Paul* be the inſtance of the great defects there may be in penitents, as to a perfect converſion, if the paſtor's inſtruction does not timely prevent them. It is by confeſſion and a ſincere repentance they are taught to make their peace with God, and obtain pardon of their ſins. And how often is it, Converts, and others, make uſe of this help in going to confeſſion, and ſeem ſecure of pardon, who, as often as they go, carry with them, I do not ſay the ſame imperfections, but the ſame weight of crimes; and this for months and years, thinking and ſeemingly reſolved to amend; but without ever uſing a due care neceſſary for their amendment; being never willing to take the pains proportioned to the difficulty of their work, or ſuffer ſuch mortifications or ſelf-denials in the avoiding of ſin and its occaſions, without which it is impoſſible they ſhould ever be reclaimed? In this there is a very great evil, in the undue, if not ſacrilegious uſe of the ſacraments, by never heartily ſetting the axe to the root, nor purifying the heart from its habitual corruption: And though this muſt be charged on their own neglect and blindneſs; yet how great a part proceeds from want of a due inſtruction in this day's leſſon? Of this,

God is the witneſs, and he will be the ſevere judge in as many paſtors, as have been really wanting in this duty to their flock. That eaſineſs in giving abſolution to the unprepared, who bring with them no arguments of a ſincere converſion, will then appear fruitleſs to the receivers; and its diſmal effects will be manifeſt in thoſe, who have thus caſt pearl to ſwine, in their raſh and promiſcuous diſpenſing of the myſteries of God.

Again, how many betray ſtill a farther ignorance as to this point, whilſt upon a ſincere repentance, they truly reſolve to change their lives, but think little of proportioning the works of their converſion to the meaſure of their crimes? They confeſs and amend, and live within the bounds of duty, and thus farwell. But is there to be no difference between penitents, whoſe lives have been criminal, and thoſe, who in compariſon of them, may be eſteemed innocent? Thoſe who have kept neareſt to innocence, are obliged to live within the bounds of every duty; and muſt thoſe do no more, who by their ſcandals and vices have propagated and given authority to ſin? The primitive church ever required more, and the nature of true penance is not ſubject to change. St *Paul* here ſeems to require

more, when exacting a kind of proportion, he commands, that as *they have ſerved iniquity, ſo*, upon their repentance, *they ſhould ſerve juſtice*: This is a juſtice due to God, whom they have diſhonoured, to the church and their neighbour, to make ſatisfaction, by their more exemplary lives, for the many ſins they have occaſioned by their former liberties and ill example: Thus the meaſure of ſin ought ever to be the meaſure of repentance. *Hence the churchman, who by neglect, or the unedifying method of his life, has been injurious to the flock, upon the ſenſe of his fault, is obliged, by more than ordinary diligence, faſting, praying, watching, and moſt laborious endeavours, to repair the injury he has done.* He that has offended by his notorious exceſſes, is not only to be temperate, for this the moſt innocent are bound to; but, by painful mortifications, puniſh himſelf in a moſt exemplary ſelf-denial, for the encouragement of that virtue, againſt which he has offended. They who have tranſgreſſed through the violence of their carnal paſſions, by their immodeſty, their lightneſs and vanity, muſt not only reform to the rules of an exact modeſty, for this is the duty of the innocent; but ſtrictly renouncing every thing that is vain, endeavour to diſcourage all thoſe liberties, modes, di-

verſions, and expences, which, though at a diſtance, are yet diſpoſitions for the laying the ſoul open to vice. This ought to be the method of the prodigal, of the covetous, of the prophane, of the unjuſt, and of all manner of ſinners, when they return to God. And do thou, O God of mercy, inſpire thy ſervants, who ſeriouſly think of returning to thee, with this leſſon of St *Paul*; Grant they may be entirely converted, not only in forſaking their evil ways, but ſo far contributing to thy glory, by the exemplarity of their lives, as they have before diſhonoured thee and thy church by their vices. Give likewiſe to all paſtors the ſpirit of knowledge and zeal, that thy flock may be inſtructed in all neceſſary duties, and none periſh through their ill conduct who are put over them.

Seventh Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. vii. 15. Ends verſe 21.

EVERY *tree, that brings not forth good fruit, ſhall be cut down, and caſt into the fire.* That the tree, which brings forth evil fruit, ſhould be condemned to the flames, is no wonder; but it has ſomething of ſurpriſe in it, that this ſhould be the ſentence of the tree, on which good fruit is not found; for if evil be condemned, why ſhould the ſame be the fate of that in which no evil appears? And yet this is the poſitive ſentence of juſtice itſelf; he has pronounced it, and it admits neither of appeal nor reprieve. What then is the meaning of it? The fate of Chriſtians is emblemed in trees; for what is ſpoken of trees, is for the inſtruction of men; and the inſtruction is this, That not only thoſe, who live engaged in open vice, and are remarkably wicked, ſhall receive the judgment of everlaſting fire; but they alſo ſhall be involved in the ſame unhappineſs, who, being exempt from

what is generally reputed vicious, have nothing good found in them.

The reaſon is, becauſe ſuch Chriſtians live in the poſitive breach of the general commandment of God, who expreſsly requires all to avoid evil, and do good; *Declina a malo, et fac bonum.* The whole commandment muſt be ſatisfied, and they who obſerve but one part, and omit the other, live under the guilt of tranſgreſſing the precept, and can be eſteemed no better than faithleſs and diſobedient children; and who can then wonder at the puniſhment of a diſobedience, which is not accidental, but habitual, and the general practice of life? If the tree be planted for bringing forth good fruit, and it proves ever barren, is not this enough to have it rooted up? Thus it is ſentenced, you ſee, in this Goſpel; and in another place, for the ſame reaſon, order is given by the maſter of the vineyard for its being cut down, with this reproach, *Ut quid enim terram occupat?* Why ſhould ſuch a uſeleſs ſtock have place in his vineyard? And no other reprieve was granted it, but upon the hopes of its bearing fruit.

This opens the way for another reaſon; for ſince man was created for the poſſeſſion of God, and whatever bleſſings he receives, whether goods of nature or of fortune, are

the gifts of God, granted him for this end, that by a due uſe of them, he may work out his ſalvation, and come to the poſſeſſion of God; it is evident, the Chriſtian, who employs not what he has received for this end, does not anſwer the purpoſes of God, but fails in the principal end of his creation. And can this be without a crime? Read the caſe in that ſervant, who receiving a talent from his maſter, that he might advance it by traffic, and inſtead of this buried it in a napkin: And how was his plea received? He is condemned as a wicked and unprofitable ſervant, and caſt forth into utter darkneſs. But why? Did he turn to his own uſe, or otherwiſe miſ-ſpend his maſter's money? No, but he did not employ it according to order, nor anſwer the end for which it was put into his hand; and this was crime enough to draw npon him the diſpleaſure of his Lord, and to be no more reckoned as one of his ſervants.

May not Chriſtians ſee in this, that it is not only a ſin, viciouſly to miſemploy what they have received; but that they likewiſe will be caſt off, as unprofitable ſervants, who have not improved what was entruſted with them for God's glory, and their own ſalvation? Becauſe, though we ſuppoſe, no evil fruit appears in them, yet

they bring not forth good fruit, which is crime enough in thoſe, who upon ſo many titles, are obliged to abound in good fruit, and cannot fail of ſo doing, but by offending againſt gratitude, juſtice, and charity, and being guilty of abuſing whatever they have received.

If this be the deciſion of this caſe, who are the Chriſtians chiefly concerned in it? All are concerned; but thoſe principally ſeem pointed at, who are called tepid or lukewarm Chriſtians; thoſe, who being not corrupted with the ſcandalous vices of the world, and upon this conſideration are generally reputed good, are however ſubject to that interior indifferency of ſpirit, that the love of God, deſire of heaven, or fear of hell, ſcarce make any impreſſions on them: So that though they are not willing wholly to omit thoſe exerciſes, which are the help of the ſoul, yet they are not careful enough to perform them in ſuch a manner, as to receive help from them; hence all they do, that has the appearance of good, is performed out of cuſtom, or as a mere formality, without the induſtry of putting life to thoſe actions, which are only a dead form without it. And their ſolicitude being but very little for theſe duties, hence every ordinary accident is reaſon enough

for diſpenſing with them; thus they are often omitted for company, often for divertiſements, often for ſuppoſed indiſpoſition, often for ſloth itſelf: And the ſame diſorder generally attends them in reſpect of all that is good; for there being no good to be done, which has not its difficulties ariſing from the averſion of a corrupt nature, that lazineſs, which oppreſſes their mind, is like a clog upon them, from which they cannot eaſily diſengage themſelves; and therefore they chuſe rather, in favour of ſelf-love, to ſit ſtill, than to take pains in ſhaking it off: Hence their deſigns of good fall ſhort of whatever they propoſe, and they ſeldom ſatisfy any duties, either of penance or charity; and thus, though they are not ſcandalouſly wicked, yet they bring not forth good fruit.

The number of theſe Chriſtians, I fear, is very great in the world, and their caſe is here declared ſo dangerous, that it is juſtly expected, that of thoſe who, by their exemption from crimes, are ſuppoſed to be in a good way, many will be diſappointed of what they expect, through the unhappy effects of this ſlothful indifferency, by which their ſouls are kept in ſuch a barren ſtate, as to have only the leaves, but not the fruit of a Chriſtian life. However, therefore, this

rank of Chriſtians may flatter themſelves with a good opinion of the way in which they are, by looking on others who are profeſſedly wicked, yet this can give them no ſecurity; for that it is no argument of their being in the way to heaven, becauſe they ſee others more out of it than themſelves: If only the trees that bear evil fruit were condemned to the fire, this might afford ſome hopes; but ſince thoſe alſo fall under the ſame condemnation which bring not forth good fruit, where is their comfort? If they will take with them the judgment of others, even of the ancient and moſt experienced fathers of the church, theſe will turn the balance the other way, by informing them, that there may be greater hope of the vicious than the tepid Chriſtian; that while many carnal ſouls have renounced their wicked ways, and become eminent for piety, they could give no ſuch comfortable inſtances of thoſe who lived on in a ſlothful tepidity. And there may be reaſon enough; for that vicious Chriſtians are ſenſible of there being no hopes of ſalvation for them as long as they abide in that ſtate of death, and therefore that they are under the neceſſity of a change: But theſe joining the hopes of ſalvation with a ſtate that many times will not bear it, live on without ap-

prehending the neceſſity of a change, and thus are found without fruit when death comes to ſeize them.

The better fate then of theſe Chriſtians depends upon having a worſe opinion of their ſtate in which they are, and ſettling this judgment, that they are not in the way of ſalvation; that as long as they take not pains in religious duties, are not ſolicitous to overcome their ſluggiſh humour, do not ſeek firſt the kingdom of God, do not direct their lives with reference to his glory, do not live according to the Spirit of Chriſt, in daily and continual endeavours for doing the will of their Father, they are either fallen or falling: And therefore, that it is their obligation to be more in earneſt in all that concerns the ſoul; to make ſalvation their buſineſs; to be conſtant and fervent in prayer; to humble themſelves under the ſenſe of their poverty; to ſeek the life of grace by all thoſe means which God has ordained for their help; to ſtudy the length of eternity, and the value of a ſoul, in that price which Chriſt has paid for it; to be zealous in doing the will of God; to manage well their time and temporal goods, ſo as to make them ſervent for eternity, and to abound in every good work: This is the fruit which is expected from every Chriſtian, and where this is not found, there muſt

needs be danger of incurring the ſentence of the barren tree, *Cut it down, and caſt it into the fire.*

O God, give to all Chriſtians a ſenſe of this terrible truth; let thoſe endleſs flames, which are prepared for the wicked and unprofitable ſervant, raiſe up their worldly and ſluggiſh ſouls from the ſleep of tepidity, ſo unworthy of their vocation, and ſo hateful in thy ſight; give them a new ſpirit, that with vigour and life they may purſue the ways of ſalvation, and never be at peace with themſelves, till they have worked their ſouls into the happy diſpoſition of being ever zealous in doing thy holy will.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Rom. viii. 12. Ends verſe 17.

WE *are not debtors to the fleſh, to live according to the fleſh.* There is a debt we owe our bodies, in providing them what may be neceſſary for the ſupport of their being and health; this is a general charge given to all, and it is the *juſtice of God* obliges all to this care. On this motive we are to take both food and phyſic, and ſubject ourſelves to the remedies of all other neceſſities. By this motive, when it is ſincere, we have the daily opportunity of ſanctifying our moſt ordinary actions, which ſeeming to regard nothing but the body, at the ſame time are all acts of juſtice, and the payment of a debt with which God has charged us. And though few are wanting in theſe duties, yet how few are they that perform them on theſe motives; ſince all that is generally done for pleaſure and ſelf-love, which ought to proceed as the effect of

that obedience we owe to God and his juſtice.

There is again another debt we owe our bodies, and that is, to conduct them ſafe to that end for which they were created; for it is God's will, all things ſhould come to that end for which they were made. Now our bodies being deſigned for happineſs, it is our part ſo to defend them from that eternal death which waits to devour them, as to render them at the end immortal and glorious: This we have undertaken, this we owe our bodies; and it is an act of juſtice to ſatisfy this debt; but to diſcharge ourſelves of this debt we owe the fleſh, we muſt not live according to the fleſh; for this being corrupt, with all its inclinations and deſires, to live according to it would be the certain way to carry it very wide of its end, and make it, inſtead of being happy, eternally miſerable. Hence the Chriſtian, looking forward towards that end for which, through the infinite goodneſs of God, he was created, is to regard and eſteem only that as good, and his greateſt intereſt, which puts him forward on his way, and advances him to that end; all this, of whatever kind it be, he is to ſeek, embrace, and with all diligence purſue; and ſince, in all the inclinations to pleaſure and a ſenſual life, he

finds a certain malignity, which, if not prevented, will certainly deprive him of that better life he hopes for in bliſs; therefore he cannot look on them otherwiſe, than as a certain malady or diſtemper of ſoul and body, which he is obliged not to enflame and increaſe, but with all poſſible remedies to moderate, abate, and heal. Hence he is bound to have the ſame regard in treating his body, as if he had undertaken the care of ſome ſick perſon; and as in this caſe, to give the party every thing he deſires, that would do him injury, as to his diſtemper, and make him take nothing proper for his cure, would be nothing leſs than a notorious injuſtice and cruelty; ſo truly would he be equally unjuſt and cruel to himſelf, if, upon obſerving the pernicious inclinations of ſoul and body, he ſhould gratify them in their deſires, and not uſe due means to cure or prevent the growth of theſe evils to which they are ſubject: Upon this head, mortification and the privation of pleaſures appear to be a duty of juſtice: And the intemperate man is not only unjuſt to his charge, when he will not deny himſelf pleaſures that are unlawful; but likewiſe when he gives the reins to his inclinations, to the enjoyment of all thoſe liberties that are reputed lawful: Becauſe as phyſic and remedies are

not abſolutely neceſſary in themſelves, but only in caſe of ſickneſs; ſo neither are mortification and ſelf-denial, but where there is ſome diſtemper in the ſoul; and in this caſe he would be as unjuſt in the omiſſion of them, as if he ſhould let his body be conſumed by a dangerous gangrene, for want of applying fit remedies for its cure.

On this conſideration we are to frame an idea of the lives of men very different from what is generally conceived. Thoſe perſons who are auſtere and mortified, denying themſelves in the ordinary ſatisfactions and enjoyments of this life, paſs in the reputation of the world for enemies of their bodies; and yet theſe are they who love them beſt, and moſt to the purpoſe: All they do being to heal their diſtempers; to extinguiſh in them, as much as is poſſible, the ſeeds of corruption and death; to render them immortal, incorruptible, and glorious: They follow the directions preſcribed by the moſt ſkilful of all phyſicians, who is Jeſus Chriſt, and practiſed by himſelf, not for the neceſſity he had of them, but for our example; and by all his followers, who are truly wiſe, that is, wiſe to ſalvation: And though it be a courſe ſeemingly difficult, yet truly it is much eaſier than what we ſee daily undertaken and practiſed for the recovery of corporal

poral health. Thoſe chriſtians then that obſerve this method, are the true lovers of their bodies, becauſe they labour to obtain for them not paſſing ſatisfactions, but the only ſolid and ſubſtantial goods: And God, who obliges them to this juſtice, does it on a motive of mercy towards them, becauſe he ſees, this is the true way to ſecure them againſt everlaſting evils.

On the contrary, they are real enemies to their bodies, treat them not only unjuſtly, but even inhumanly, who flatter and careſs them, and endeavour to ſatisfy all the inclinations they have to the enjoyment of worldly pleaſures. For what greater cruelty, what method more becoming the moſt malicious of enemies, than to be thus induſtrious in giving poiſon to their own bodies, and daily preparing them for infinite and endleſs torments? Whoever ſhould deſign to break them a leg or an arm, or even any ways disfigure them, would be certainly marked for an enemy; and what more favourable character can they give themſelves, who thus raſhly run into precipices, and by their extravagant liberties are daily drawing on an eternal deſtruction on the whole? And yet this is the buſineſs of the voluptuous, and of all

thoſe, who court the world, and paſs their lives in the enjoyment of its pleaſures: It is this they alſo put to the hazard, who purpoſely decline all ſelf-denials, and cannot bear what is neceſſary to mortify thoſe paſſions, which are continually carrying them out of the way. So that this advice of the Apoſtle is not the concern of thoſe only, whoſe lives are notoriouſly criminal; but of as many as experience in themſelves the effects of corruption, and that is of all. For the works of the fleſh are of a very large extent, there being no ſort of paſſion, affection, or deſire, no kind of exceſs, diſorder or practice, which is contrary to any command of God, or any ways interferes with a chriſtian's duty, but what is comprehended under this head: And whoever they be that live either in the practice or encouragement of any ſuch diſorder, nay, who do not ſeriouſly labour by proportioned ſelf-denials, to overcome it, all theſe may be ſaid to live according to the fleſh, are paying what is no debt, and will be found wanting in the diſcharge of that moſt juſt duty, they owe their bodies, in rendering them immortal and happy; for it is St. *Paul* ſays it in the ſpirit of God; *If you live according to the fleſh, you ſhall die: But*

if by the ſpirit you mortify the deeds of the fleſh, you ſhall live. This is a taſk we have all undertaken; grant therefore, O God of mercy, we may ſo truly underſtand our eternal intereſt, that mortifying in ourſelves all thoſe inclinations, which are the effects of corruption, and flatter our ſenſes, we may take that more diſagreeable way to our fleſh, which is preſcribed in thy goſpel, and ſuggeſted by thy ſpirit, and thus abundantly find the recompence of all our ſelf-denials in the enjoyment of that glorious life we hope for and thou haſt promiſed.

Eighth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xvi. 1. Ends verſe 9.

GIVE an account of thy ſtewardſhip; for now thou canſt be ſteward no longer. This goſpel is the parable of the unjuſt ſteward, in which we are not to have regard to his injuſtice, by which he waſted his maſter's goods, nor to his fraud, in changing the obligations of the debtors; but only to thoſe truths which Chriſt here deſigns to teach us; which are, firſt, The unhappy ſtate, into which this ſteward had brought himſelf, repreſenting the ſtate of chriſtians: Secondly, the means he uſed for preventing the miſery he apprehended, which are here recommended, as the beſt ſecurity againſt the misfortunes that threaten us.

The perſon here mentioned, was the ſteward of a certain rich man, and we are all the ſtewards of God: Upon whatever title we hold what we poſſeſs, yet ſtill God has the dominion over all, as Sovereign Lord, and upon this title,

which is founded upon an eternal law, and therefore not to be alienated, he can command and diſpoſe of all, and we cannot complain of injuſtice, when he takes from us, or obliges us to ſurrender, what we call our own. Holding therefore all under God, we are his ſtewards, not only as to the goods we have in our power, but likewiſe, as to the uſe of thoſe goods. For it cannot be imagined, God has entruſted them in our hands, for us to diſpoſe of at pleaſure; no, theſe goods are deſigned by Providence, as means for the ſubſiſtence of men; and he has depoſited them in the hands of ſome, that they may diſtribute them to others. A rich man therefore, as rich, is a ſteward of thoſe goods which God has entruſted with him; and it is not allowed him to let them be diſpoſed of by fancy, humour, or corruption; but all is to be done with regard to the engagements of Providence to neceſſity, and to the order of charity. Theſe are the terms, upon which all receive whatever they poſſeſs; and it is what is preſcribed them, not by temporal laws, which may be changed, but by an eternal law, which is unchangeable.

And this is not the condition only of the rich, but likewiſe of all others; for if they are not ſtewards of poſſeſſions and

money, yet they are to give an account of the goods of nature, of their ſoul and body, their time, thoughts, deſires, health, ſenſes, &c. Nay, even of their misfortunes, ſickneſs, poverty, loſſes; for all theſe being means for the practice of virtue, they are a kind of talents, which ought to be improved, and an account will be demanded, how we have uſed them.

Thus we are all the ſtewards of God, and the ſummons will be particular to every chriſtian; *Redde rationem villicationis tuæ: Give an account of thy ſtewardſhip.* Now when we look back on all that is paſt, and ſee how little we have correſponded with the orders of our Lord, either in the goods of fortune, or of nature; how incapable we are of ſaying with truth, that with every five talents received, we have gained other five; but have proſtituted the greateſt part to vice, vanity, folly or humour: That nothing of all we have done, can be hid from his eyes, who will demand the account; that our very actions will ſpeak and diſcover themſelves, notwithſtanding all the colours, with which we have diſguiſed them in the ſight of men; have not all reaſon to apprehend the conſequence of their ill management, and that being rejected by their Lord, eternal poverty will be the puniſhment of their ill

adminiſtration? May not therefore every one cry out, with this ſteward, *Quid faciam, what ſhall I do?* He juſtly may.

But he that beſt knows our misfortune, here mercifully points out the ſureſt means for preventing it; and that is, by making a good uſe of the goods of our Lord, which yet remain in our hands, and by employing them, as far as neceſſity will allow, in works of mercy. This would be unjuſt in reſpect of men; but it is not ſo in regard of God, who is repreſented here under the parable of a rich man: Nay, it is the very thing he preſcribes, that ſo we may provide friends for our defence againſt that poverty, with which we are threatened. What he adviſes therefore is, that inſtead of all thoſe expences, which are to ſupport pride and pleaſure, and inſtead of all thoſe ſuperfluities, which are to anſwer the demands of humour and ſelf-love, we now with a pious induſtry turn all that, which has been hitherto miſemployed, to works of charity, ſo preparing for ourſelves advocates for the other Life.

Not that alms are ſo powerful, as to ſave any ſinner without true repentance; there being no remiſſion of ſins to be expected, but by a ſincere converſion of the heart; but that God many times does

not grant this true converſion, but as moved to it by works of charity, and plentiful alms. And it is in this ſenſe, Chriſt ſays to the Phariſees, that in giving, what they had ſuperfluous, to the poor, all ſhould be clean to them: and in the ſame, *Nabuchadonoſor* is counſelled to redeem his ſins by alms. For it cannot be pretended that God will pardon unrepenting ſinners: But rich men are here informed, that the principal means, which Gods puts into their hands, for obtaining this ſpirit of penance, is to ſeek it by giving alms, and thus to provide themſelves friends, who will intercede with him in their behalf.

But this is not a help for the rich only, but for all, of whatever condition; there being none to be ſaved, but by the practice of charity; as appears in the ſentence of the laſt day which calls the elect to the joys of heaven, as the reward of their charity; and condemns the reprobate as unworthy, for not having practiſed it. It is therefore a thing, which falls within the compaſs of every ſtate; thoſe, who have no money, have it in their power to give ſpiritual alms, by inſtructing, counſelling, reproving, comforting; by bearing and forbearing; by pa-

tience, ſweetneſs, compaſſion, forgiving; by good example, and doing all to edification; by good wiſhes, deſires, prayers; by lamenting the miſery of ſinners, and blindneſs of unbelievers, and ſoliciting heaven in their behalf, by tears, faſting and ſelf-denials: None can pretend, they have it not in their power to practiſe theſe charities; and it is by the practice of theſe, all are to ſeek for the mercies of God, both for the pardon of ſin, and eſtabliſhment in all good.

By the practice of charity, then, whether temporal or ſpiritual, all chriſtians have it in their power to make an intereſt, for being received into the eternal tabernacles, by the aſſiſtance of others prayers. And this is an admirable expedient of the divine goodneſs, for uniting chriſtians together by the commerce of charity. Their mutual neceſſities make a mutual dependence: If the poor have need of the rich, to contribute to their ſubſiſtence; the rich have need of the poor, for obtaining the grace and mercies of God And yet this ought not to be a motive, for applying charity to thoſe only among the poor, who being reputed virtuous, are likely to pray for their benefactors: For where neceſſities are moſt preſſing, there charity is firſt to

be applied; and if theſe happen to be upon perſons whoſe ingratitude or averſion gives little hopes of their prayers, yet God will ſupply by his goodneſs, what is wanting in them, who will not conſider what they do, but what they ought to do for ſuch as give them relief.

Thus Chriſt inſtructs the faithful, how they may prevent all the miſchiefs of their paſt ill management. But ſince he complains here in the concluſion of this goſpel, that the children of darkneſs are wiſer in their generation than the children of light, in being more induſtrious in providing againſt the dangers that threaten; ſince we ſee this daily verified, in the labours of worldly men; ſo that they would certainly be great ſaints, did they take as much pains for their eternal well-being, as they do for the eſtabliſhment of their fortune; this reproach of our Redeemer ought to condemn our ſlothful indifferency, and puts us upon reſolutions of being more induſtrious in the concerns of eternity, and particularly in making uſe of the means he is ſo mercifully pleaſed to recommend. Let this mercy, I beſeech thee, O Jeſus, move us; let the weight of eternity, force us on; and having a daily reproach before our eyes, in the

ſolicitude of worldly ſouls, let us timely provide, as thou haſt taught us, againſt everlaſting poverty; that, if we cannot give a good account, we may, at leaſt, thus be prepared againſt the miſchiefs of our ill ſtewardſhip.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* x. 6. Ends verſe 13.

THeſe things happened to them (the Jews) *in a figure, that we may not abandon ourſelves to evil deſires as they did.* The Apoſtle in this chapter, having numbered up the great mercies of God ſhewn to the *Jews*, as likewiſe the many tranſgreſſions of that people in neglect and contempt of all his helps and favours, then adds this charitable advice to us, That all this was a figure, and that in them we may read our fate, if we follow the example of their crimes. They were all baptiſed, under the conduct of *Moſes*, in the cloud and in the ſea; they all eat of the ſame ſpiritual food, they all drank of the water of that ſpiritual rock, which followed them, who was Chriſt; and yet of that great number, there were very few found pleaſing to God, but almoſt all periſhed in the deſert, and never

came to the land of promiſe. Now it is very evident, the cloud and the ſea were a figure of our baptiſm, the *manna* and water of the rock were a figure of the *Holy Euchariſt*; and ſo all this happened to them in figure: And, no queſtion, but, as St. *Paul* obſerves, the ſeverity of God's anger on the ſinful *Jews*, was likewiſe a figure of that ſeverity God will ſhew to wicked chriſtians; and their partaking of his holy ſacraments, *Baptiſm* and the *Euchariſt*, will not ſecure them againſt as univerſal an excluſion from the land of promiſe, as was that of the *Jews*, if they imitate that rebellious and ſtiff-necked people, in their infidelity and wickedneſs: For thus far the alluſion, here made by the Apoſtle, ſeems to reach; and there is nothing but the exemplary and truly virtuous lives of chriſtians, can poſſibly prevent the fulfilling this part of the figure with the reſt: For as the helps and mercies of God towards chriſtians, far exceed thoſe to the *Jews*, in the ſame degree will the rigours of his juſtice be more ſevere, if we ſuppoſe in chriſtians a reſemblance of *Jewiſh* crimes. And, O God, how great reaſon have we to fear in this point, ſince the face of *Chriſtendom* ſeems to ſhew us as univerſal a rebellion againſt God, as was

that in the deſert! What is it, this more diſciplined part of the world runs after, but intereſt, ambition, and pleaſure? Vanity, pride and exceſs, is every where in repute; injuſtice, fraud and over-reaching one another, is a general practice: Lying, murmuring, envy, and contentions, are authorized by cuſtom: Aſcend in ſpirit, ſays St. *Cyprian*, to the top of a high mountain, from whence thou mayeſt take a view of the world, and caſt thy eyes, if thy tears will give thee leave, on ſea and land, on palaces, markets, houſes, and tribunals, and thou wilt behold ſuch an infinite multitude of ſins, of lies, calumnies, cheats, perjuries, envy, vanity; ſo great a forgetfulneſs of God, and contempt of ſalvation, as if there were no proſpect of another life. Thou wilt ſee the greateſt part of men living like brutes, following the violence of their paſſions, without regard to juſtice or reaſon, as if there were nothing more than to be born and to die. There thou wilt ſee the innocent oppreſſed, the guilty encouraged, the wicked advanced, the good contemned, and that in all buſineſs, favour goes farther than virtue. Thou wilt ſee the laws ſold, truth deſpiſed, modeſty loſt: Arts, profeſſions and offices

corrupted, money commanding, intereſt governing, and a general homage paid to dependence: finally, thou wilt ſee vice ſo public, that it paſſes for lawful for being public: *Conſenſere Jura peccatis, et cæpit eſſe licitum, quod publicum.* Is not this the true character of our diſordered world? Each ſex, every age and quality, whether eccleſiaſtic or laick, having their peculiar corruptions; all admiring and cenſuring their neighbours; but very few, that ſee their own faults, and much fewer, that truly take pains to reform them! Is there not then too great reaſon to fear, that this part of the figure will be fulfilled with the others, and that this univerſal rebellion will be followed with as univerſal an excluſion from the land of the living?

And though there are great numbers of pious chriſtians, who being exempt from this general corruption, may hope to be diſtinguiſhed from this maſs of the wicked; yet this hope, however it may leſſen, does not yet wholly remove our fears; becauſe the grace of God is not only loſt by corporal and notorious ſins, from which theſe have an aſſurance of being free, but likewiſe by pride, envy, ſpiritual ſloth, ſelf-love, and by any criminal adheſion to things of this world. We know of no corporal or

public crimes committed by the Phariſees; nay, we know, they were exact obſervers of the law, and nice in every thing that had relation to the worſhip and ſervice of God: And yet Chriſt declares, they ſhould be more rigorouſly puniſhed than the reſt of the *Jews*. Their only ſin was that of pride and hypocriſy, and very likely, ſuch as was not obſerved, if not wholly unknown to them. For this they were excluded: And who knows, how many chriſtians there may be, living with the reputation of ſanctity, by their abhorring every thing that can give offence, and yet interiorly no better than Phariſees, and with them to have their eternal portion? Again, the *Capharnaits*, who were a people no ways remarkable for any ſort of extravagancy above their neighbours, are yet threatened with a more rigorous judgment than thoſe of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah*, towns defiled with the moſt abominable crimes, and this for the only ſin of neglect and ingratitude, in not making a good uſe of the favours Chriſt had done them, in working ſo many miracles in their ſight. Now who knows, how many chriſtians ſeemingly good, may be yet reproached with the ſame charge of neglect and ingratitude, in not having laid hold on, or

improved the opportunities God had often given them for their good; and that for the ſole abuſe of God's favours, they may be caſt out with the *Capharnaits*, with thoſe of *Sodom* and *Gomorrah?* Laſtly, Since we find the guilt of thoſe unhappy ones, who ſhall be placed on the left-hand of the judge, is not contracted by corporal or ſcandalous ſins, but only by the omiſſion of duties and of the works of mercy; ſince we ſee the vices principally threatened in the goſpel, are ſpiritual ones, as the abuſe of God's grace and word, ambition, pride, covetouſneſs, tepidity, *&c.* and the virtues there chiefly recommended are interior, regarding the inward man, as the love of enemies, reſervedneſs in judging, being dead to the world, renouncing human ſatisfactions, humility, charity, vigilance in prayer, a zeal for juſtice, ſimplicity of heart, *&c.* Since, I ſay, we find the grace of God and ſalvation, depending on theſe interior diſpoſitions, have we not reaſon to fear, that of thoſe, in whom no exterior wickedneſs or extraordinary diſorder was ever known, there will be many, who being judged by the ſearcher of hearts, will be found guilty, and for their more ſpiritual ſins, caſt out into utter darkneſs?

I ſay not this, to make any deſpond or

fright them into deſpair; but, as we have reaſon to hope in God's mercy, ſo to lay before chriſtians the motives they have to fear his juſtice; for this fear deſtroys not that confidence we ought to have in his goodneſs, but rather helps to eſtabliſh it, ſince this very fear is one of the greateſt effects of his mercy, and the greater this is, the more reaſon we have to hope he will regard us with a favourable eye: We are to fear him then, becauſe he is to be feared, and becauſe we certainly know not whether charity or concupiſcence reigns in our heart: but this fear is not to deject or diſcourage us in our chriſtian duties, but rather to awaken and make us leſs confident in our own ſtrength, and more watchful in all our ways; and this is the ſureſt way to prevent the fulfilling this part of the figure; or that we be no part of it at leaſt, if, through the wickedneſs of chriſtians, it be to be fulfilled. Grant then, O God, that the ſeverity of thy juſtice executed upon the *Jews*, may be a means of directing us to thy mercy; and that what has been written for our correction, may have that good effect, as ſeriouſly to put us on a reformation; for it is only by avoiding the ſins of that people, we can hope to eſcape their puniſhment.

Ninth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xix. 41. Ends verſe 47.

AS Jeſus drew near, ſeeing the city, he wept over it. Our paſſions being the general occaſion of ſin, Chriſt, in his own perſon, has taught us a better uſe of them, even ſuch, as may help us in our way to heaven. Being provoked by the prophaneneſs of thoſe, who trafficed in the temple, he has ſhewn us, that only ſin ought to be the object of our anger. Being ſenſible of the fear of death, he has taught us, in all our fears and weakneſſes, to ſubmit to the will of God, and to give his holy will the preference to the natural deſire we ever have of being exempt from temporal evils. In earneſtly deſiring to accompliſh his baptiſm, that is, his paſſion, and to eat the laſt paſſover with his diſciples, he has pointed to us, what ought to be the object of our deſires: And now being moved with compaſſion,

and weeping over *Jeruſalem*, he inſtructs us, what it is principally, that ought to excite our grief. He ſaw the city, and being ſenſible of the blindneſs of the *Jews*, of their contempt of the graces that were offered, of their neglecting the opportunities of finding mercy, and foreſeeing the deſtruction that was falling upon them, in puniſhment of their obſtinacy, he therefore laments their miſery, and expreſſes his grief in tears; tears very different from thoſe of men, who weep for paſſion, intereſt, weakneſs, ſelf-love, and hypocriſy: But the tears of Chriſt are holy and ſanctifying, tears of religion, and zeal for the glory of God, and which make a part of his ſacrifice; tears of compaſſion and charity for ſinners; tears of contrition and penance for ſin; tears of inſtruction and comfort for penitents.

Such grief as this, is chriſtian grief, juſtified, approved and ſanctified in their head: And have not chriſtians reaſon to mix their tears with their Head, when they conſider the greateſt part of the world buried in infidelity, the believing part torn with ſchiſms, the orthodox part diſfigured with the vices of heathens; when they ſee a univerſal corruption authorized amongſt the profeſſors of the goſpel,

and in this point, no veil of diſtinction betwixt the people and the altar? This blindneſs of miſtaken chriſtians, and obſtinacy of the vicious, with the conſideration of God, whom they offend, and the eternal miſery into which they unthinkingly run, is enough to provoke tears from the eyes of chriſtians; and there is nothing but the narrowneſs of human ſpirit, diverted by preſent objects from thinking of their own and others miſery, which is the reaſon of their not being daily conſumed with grief.

And ſince, through our want of faith, and our ſtupidity, we ſeldom reflect ſo much on our own unhappineſs, or that of our fellow-members, as to let theſe draw tears from us, but if we weep at all, it is for what deſerves not our tears; we have reaſon to beg of Jeſus this day, that he would give us a true ſenſe of our miſery, and teach us to weep as chriſtians and penitents, not for what is taken from our paſſions, or for thoſe evils, which paſs with time, and may be more our advantage than our loſs; but for the unhappy ſtate of ſinners, for our hatred to ſin, the only real evil, and for the loſs of his grace and his love, the only real goods. And let us aſk too, that he would teach all

prieſts to weep as prieſts, and religious to weep as religious, that is, upon a lively ſenſe of the intereſt of God, to lament the evils of the church, and the blindneſs of ſinners, and by tears, reſembling thoſe of Chriſt, endeavour to move the Father of Mercies to have compaſſion on all thoſe who, blinded by ſin, ſee not their own miſery.

This it was Chriſt principally lamented in the Jews, and therefore he ſighs over *Jeruſalem: Ah! if thou didſt but know in this thy day, what is for thy Peace: But now all this is hid from thy eyes.* This is the great concern of ſinners, to know the time and ways of ſalvation. Their greateſt misfortune is not, in being ſinners, but in not knowing their ſins, and the remedies of them, and in rejecting thoſe means which God offers for their help. All ſinners have their day, as *Jeruſalem* had, in which, if they would conſider, what is for their peace, and give ear to thoſe viſits which God makes them, it is not to be doubted, but he, who wills not the death of a ſinner, would receive them into favour, and prevent thoſe judgments which are falling upon them. But if they let this their day paſs over, without making any advantage of the offered mercy,

what muſt they then ſee, but the days of juſtice and revenge? Here then is the great blindneſs of ſinners; they prefer that falſe peace, which they find in ſin, in their paſſions, and in the ſatisfactions of the preſent life, before the more ſolid peace of penance and the croſs.

This is the blindneſs from which we are daily to beſeech God to deliver us, that the means of ſalvation, and ways of peace, may not be hid from our eyes. We are at preſent in this day of peace, and none of us, whatever our guilt be, can pretend, that God does not call upon us to forſake our evil ways, and accept of mercy. This he does ſufficiently in this preſent goſpel; and does he not this at other times, by his miniſters and holy books, by examples of virtue which he preſents to us, by inſpirations which enlighten and touch our hearts, by afflictions, in which he puniſhes our diſorders, by particular occaſions, which he offers of working out our ſalvation, in doing charities to our neighbour, protecting the innocent, and ſuccouring the afflicted? Does not Jeſus Chriſt preſent himſelf in all theſe ways, viſiting us, as he did *Jeruſalem*, putting into our hands the price of our ſalvation, and pointing out to us the way by which we may come to

it? And what have we to do for effecting it, but to acknowledge the mercy of his visits, and resolutely to undertake what he proposes?

Thus are we all at present in the day of peace, and in circumstances of laying the foundation of an eternal peace: But if we neglect the opportunity now offered, and, like the *Jews*, are deaf to all the calls of mercy, who can secure us of another visit from heaven? Who can promise that God will again call upon us, or that the rigour of his justice will not succeed this mercy? The *Jews* were as securely confident, as we can be, when they were surprized with unheard-of judgments, such as awakened them to confusion, but not to repentance: And how many poor souls are now irrecoverably lost, who despising the offers of a merciful God inviting to repentance, slept on under a false security, till the divine justice opened their eyes to see their folly, but without place for amendment? And will not this be the fate of all those, who knowing not what is for their peace, and having the means of salvation hid from them, walk on as securely in their evil ways, as if the measure of life, was in their own hands, and they could command

mand the grace of a true converſion whenever they pleaſed?

There is too much reaſon to fear this will be their lot; and hence I cannot but apprehend, that this unhappy iſſue has been in many the puniſhment of their preſumption or neglect. Firſt, In numbers of thoſe who have been unhappily educated under the deluſion of errors; and when God has mercifully put them in circumſtances of being enlightened; nay, and by ſufficient glimpſes of light called upon them to open their eyes, have either wholly neglected this offer, or being prevailed on by temporal conſiderations to put by this buſineſs to a more ſeaſonable time, have never more found that time, but have been unfortunately ſurpriſed by ſuch ſickneſs as has rendered them incapable of then doing what they neglected in health, and have died in their errors.

Secondly, In many who have been brought up in ignorance, and though not erring in faith, have yet ſuch an imperfect ſenſe of their practical duties, that their faith appears not in their life: And how many of theſe, neglecting the means of better inſtruction when they have been offered, have afterwards met with temptations above

their ſtrength, and, through a faulty weakneſs, been drawn into vice or error.

Thirdly, In infinite numbers, who engaged in vice, but with thoughts of amendment have put by the motions of heaven, declined the viſits of thoſe whoſe charity God excited for their help, and afterwards have either never met with the like offers, or come at length to deſpiſe what they at firſt neglected. How often has the ſame happened to ſtill infinite others, who, often touched with the ſenſe of their diſorders, of ill cuſtoms, of omiſſions, of ſloth, &c. have as often reſolved upon entering upon a new method; but finding reaſons for delays, have been in them cut off in puniſhment of their neglect? Thus are we bound to acknowledge in others the ſad effects of deſpiſed mercies: Grant, O God, that this may not be our ſin, but that we may have our hearts ever open to thee, to receive the benefit of the viſits of thy grace and goodneſs, that ſo taking the advantage of the preſent, we may truly apply ourſelves to the things that are for our peace, and ſo prevent thoſe judgments which we confeſs are due to our ſins.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* xii. 2. Ends verſe 11.

YOU *know when you were heathens, how you were led after dumb idols. Wherefore I declare to you, that no man ſpeaking in the Spirit of God, can pronounce anathema againſt Jeſus; and no man can ſay, that Jeſus is the Lord, but by the Holy Ghoſt.* Running after dumb idols is not a Chriſtian practice; and whoever does it is a heathen, is at defiance with God, and whatever his belief be, in fact, pronounces Jeſus accurſed. But, however, as in the regenerate there is a natural corruption, which raiſes a contradiction and war againſt all other virtues, and even ſuch duties as are moſt indiſpenſible; ſo there are ſeeds of infidelity which ſometimes ſhoot forth in contradiction to faith, and that holy belief they are bound to have of God and his moſt ſacred truths. And as it is the Spirit of God that eſtabliſhes and ſecures them in the principles and practice of chriſtian duties; as it was the

Spirit of God, by whoſe work and power the Chriſtian faith was firſt planted in the world and in their hearts; ſo it muſt be the effect of the ſame Holy Spirit to defend it againſt all temptations and aſſaults of an incredulous temper or malicious world. God, in the eſtabliſhing the Chriſtian faith, ſufficiently provided againſt all doubts: Firſt, when he confirmed the truth of Chriſt's preaching by the evidence of miracles; when he approved from heaven what Chriſt taught, and at the ſame time gave us an aſſurance, above all queſtions of private reaſon, what we are bound to believe: Secondly, when Chriſt aroſe from the dead, manifeſting himſelf to above five hundred brethren at once, and in this giving proof of his doctrine above all ſuſpicion; ſince it was in the power of any one of that number to have diſcovered it, had it been an impoſture; eſpecially too, having the encouragement of all human motives to do it, and nothing but the force of a certain truth to put them upon publiſhing and atteſting the miracle. Thirdly, when Chriſt ſent twelve fiſhermen, poor, ignorant, and unprovided of all human talents and helps, to reform and convert the whole world, to change their opinions and actions, to make them deteſt what they had adored, hate what they

had loved, renounce all preſent ſatisfactions, in hopes of a future life: The infinite diſproportion of this undertaking with human ſtrength, conſidering what men they were, ſhews they were evidently convinced of their commiſſion being divine, and of the unqueſtionable aſſurance they had of a heavenly aſſiſtance promiſed them for the execution of it. For without this certainty, how could they have engaged in this infinite work? Without the evidence of Chriſt's reſurrection, and the preſence of his Spirit, how could they, now divided throughout the world, have ſo unanimouſly preached the ſame truths, and with one conſent ſuffer all manner of extremities, and lay down their lives in teſtimony of what they had taught? And now we have ſeen the prodigious effects of this order of Chriſt riſen from the dead, in the church propagated over the world, in Paganiſm deſtroyed, in the truth received; nothing can be more contrary to reaſon, than, after the accompliſhment of ſo wonderful a work, to doubt of its being the effect of the reſurrection and aſcenſion of Chriſt. The evident certainty of theſe myſteries was a ſolid ground to the apoſtles not to doubt of ſucceſs in the execution of his orders; and the ſucceſs of their preaching and ſuffering is a ſolid ground to eſtab-

liſh Chriſtians of all ages in the faith of thoſe myſteries. Fourthly, When Chriſt ſending his apoſtles to convert the world, promiſed he would manifeſt his authority and power in them, by their ſpeaking in divers tongues, by their curing diſeaſes, and caſting out devils; it is impoſſible they ſhould have continued to believe in him, if they had ſeen no effects of what he had foretold and promiſed: It is more impoſſible they ſhould ſo unanimouſly have given their lives to atteſt the truth of that religion which they had found to be an impoſture. Thoſe miracles then did happen, as was foretold: Therefore Jeſus is truly riſen from the dead, and aſcended into heaven, who promiſed to give theſe miraculous proofs in teſtimony of his being the *Meſſias*, and of the truth of what he taught: Therefore the Chriſtian religion is true; and we have reaſon to bleſs the infinite goodneſs of God who has left us ſuch evidence in a point of this concern, whereon our eternity depends.

Now though theſe motives, with many others, may be a full conviction to human reaſon of this truth; yet none can ſincerely ſay, that Jeſus is the Lord, but in the Spirit of God. For where a ſoul is not animated from above with a ſincere deſire of finding and knowing the truth, but effectually lies

under the prejudices of corrupt nature, and the blindneſs of paſſion; the evidence of reaſon is darkneſs to ſuch an one, and the greateſt miracles are altogether unprofitable, and without effect. The ſad experience of this we ſee in the Scribes and Phariſees, and almoſt all the *Jews*: The ſtrongeſt motives of reaſon and authority were rendered uſeleſs by their corruption and inſincerity; and the greateſt wonders of the divine power prevailed nothing on them, who obſtinately interpreted every thing in favour of thoſe principles which pride and prepoſſeſſion had rooted in them. Thoſe who were witneſſes of the miracles, by a ſiniſter expoſition damped all their force. Such as heard them by report, took not the pains to examine the truth: Others believed them falſe, without enquiring; for ſloth and prejudice find it eaſier to believe things falſe, than to make any ſearch there, where an unexpected evidence is like to prove very troubleſome in its conſequence, by obliging them to ſuſpect that which education and paſſion will not give them leave to diſown or forſake. Thus the weakeſt reaſons are ſufficient to hold a ſoul (that is not ſincere) in in all its prejudices, and the ſtrongeſt are not ſufficient to make him abandon them.

Hence appears the neceſſity of the gift of

faith: The firſt effect of which is to inſpire a ſoul with the love of truth, and put him on making a ſincere enquiry after it; this will not permit him to ſet up his own private ſentiments for a ſtandard, approving and condemning every thing as it ſuits or diſagrees with theſe; for this may be too often the effect of obſtinacy, inſtead of faith, and from one ill principle make way for endleſs and irrecoverable errors; but it makes him indifferent to all he already ſeems to know; ſo that (weighing every thing according to the ſtrength of motives with an unbiaſſed hand) he is ready to renounce all prepoſſeſſions, whatever they be, wherever the weight of certainty turns the balance: Such a diſpoſition as this evidently proceeds from a ſincere deſire of truth; and whoever thus ſearches for it, engages Providence to direct him to it: God's goodneſs cannot withſtand the ſincerity of ſuch an enquiry; but, as he has promiſed, will certainly be found of thoſe that ſeek him thus; this is already the effect of faith, and an eſtabliſhed and conſummate faith will be the reward and fruit of ſuch a ſearch. For where obſtinacy, pride, and ſelf-love, are laid aſide; where education, conveniences of life, and all human reſpects, are ſo far renounced, as to be in a preparation of be-

ing ſurrendered to the force of truth; there, earth being abandoned, Heaven muſt govern; there, the ſpirit of the world being diſclaimed, the Spirit of God muſt neceſſarily command; and none in the Spirit of God can ſay *anathema* to Jeſus. He will poſſeſs whom he has looked for, and by him be led into all truth; and though a Chriſtian, when eſtabliſhed in the truth, is ſtill expoſed to variety of aſſaults from curioſity, pride, and the vain deſire of being wiſe beyond the bounds of ſobriety; yet, while the heart is firm, theſe workings of an ungoverned imagination can do no injury to faith, which, like other virtues, is generally more confirmed than prejudiced from ſuch attempts of a troubleſome enemy. He that is truly humble, and builds his ſecurity on God's truth, and the promiſed aſſiſtance of his Spirit, may be unconcerned, and even contemn the weakneſs of theſe ſnares, as not doubting but the ſame ſincerity and dependence on God which brought him to the light, will ever preſerve him in the ſecure poſſeſſion of it.

Tenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xviii. 9. Ends verſe 14.

JESUS *ſpoke this parable to ſome, who confided in themſelves as juſt, and deſpiſed others.* And the parable is of the *Phariſee* and *Publican*, who went up to the Temple to pray: In which are drawn two characters by the hand of Jeſus Chriſt; the one of miſtaken juſtice, in the perſon of the *Phariſee*; the other of true repentance, in the perſon of the *Publican*; and theſe deſerve the conſideration of all Chriſtians, whoſe great intereſt it is to avoid the one, and be ſolicitous for the other.

The *Phariſee* is here deſcribed, as wholly taken up with the thoughts of his own juſtice; his virtue ſeems to him pure, and without mixture: He is ſenſible of no wounds in his ſoul, which would oblige him to have recourſe to the heavenly Phyſician; he ſees in himſelf no ſins, for which he ſhould aſk pardon of God. Hence his pride being without check, a preſumptuous confidence fills his ſoul, and this is the diſ-

poſition, with which he comes to prayer. There is no ſtate more dangerous for a Chriſtian, than to ſee nothing in himſelf but virtue, becauſe he is not capable of bearing ſuch a proſpect, without loſing himſelf; and therefore it is nothing leſs than a mercy in God, to permit us to be ſubject to failings and miſeries, and to put them often before our eyes, that ſo our pride may have always a counterpoiſe, ſuch as may keep the ſoul in a ſtate of perpetual humiliation; and if there be any, who ſee them not, there can be no other reaſon, but becauſe ſuch are blinded by ſelf-love, and ſee not themſelves but in that glaſs, which pride holds to them.

The miſcarriage of this *Phariſee* preſenting himſelf thus before God, is enough to make Chriſtians fearful of the like diſorder. The greateſt number can ſcarce be apprehended as in danger of it, becauſe their daily ſins look them ſo full in the face, that they muſt be doubly blind, if they are proud of their virtues, and ſee nothing at the ſame time to confound this pride. And as for others, though there are everywhere failings enough, which, one would think, might be ſecurity againſt this evil; yet ſince ſelf-love is ſo very partial in putting a blind on that ſide, and even thoſe, who ſometimes

ſee nothing in themſelves, but what inclines them to deſpair, at other times put ſuch a favourable conſtruction on all within them, as to preſume, with this *Phariſee*, that they ſtand not in need of mercy: Therefore, I think, the motives of fear and humiliation are neceſſary for all, that while Chriſtians take pains in ſatisfying their duty, they may be provided againſt the aſſaults of pride, and not loſe the benefit of all they do.

Their great art then muſt be, in giving a check to all preſuming thoughts, by rendering even their virtue ſuſpected. And may not this eaſily be? For what if they can ſay, with the *Phariſee*, that they are neither thieves, unjuſt, nor adulterers? This may be true, that they have never done the outward actions of theſe crimes, but can they ſay with aſſurance, that they have never incurred the guilt of them? A paſſing conſent is enough to render us criminals before God; and who can poſitively pronounce of themſelves in a caſe, where the ſubtilty of thought mixes all with ſo much uncertainty and darkneſs? This uncertainty, then, put into the balance againſt all appearance of virtue, may moderate all inclinations to preſumption with a reaſonable fear; it being permitted for [illegible] by providence, that ſo all excels of confidence in ourſelves might be prevented.

Again, if Chriſtians have declined the ways of ſin, and been exempt from vice; are they certain they have done this for the love of juſtice, and upon the motive of doing the will of God? May not all this have been the effect of pride, for gaining reputation with men? May it not have been the fruit of fear, or ſhame, or of ſelf-love, ſeeking the ſatisfaction of conſidering themſelves juſt, and not like other men? The outward actions are no more than the bark or ſhell; it is the motive of acting that gives the ſpirit and life, and as long as Chriſtians are not aſſured that a ſecret corruption has not tainted what they have done, they have ſtill grounds to ſuſpect and not confide in themſelves.

Thirdly, if what they have done be ſuppoſed pure and unmixed; yet what grounds for preſent confidence are ſuch virtues, if at preſent they do not ſubſiſt? And can they be poſitive in this? One wilful ſin, whether corporal or ſpiritual, is enough to overthrow all, and how many ſuch ſins are there which are almoſt imperceptible; as the abuſe of divine grace, ingratitude, envy, raſh judgment, want of charity? If therefore they give thanks for not having part in the ſcandalous corruptions of the world; yet this muſt be accompanied with an humble

fear, leſt by ſecret ſins they have rendered themſelves unworthy in the ſight of God.

Fourthly, Since all the graces which Chriſtians receive are with an obligation of making an improvement of them, and daily to advance in good; a want of aſſurance here is enough to oblige them to a perpetual diſtruſt of themſelves. It is what has made the greateſt Saints always little in their own eyes: And who then can dare to preſume, as long as they are under this uncertainty?

Laſtly, If Chriſtians, by the help of grace, have done well, are not they ſtill in want of new grace to perſevere in good? And may not they, for want of this, eaſily fall from whatever degree of virtue they have hitherto gained? If therefore they have nothing elſe to keep them humble, is not the ſenſe of their weakneſs, which muſt be ſupported by new ſuccours, enough to make them dependent on God, to fear themſelves, and with humility to ſeek for his help?

None of theſe humbling thoughts occur to the *Phariſee*, and therefore his pride, being at full liberty, takes poſſeſſion of his heart, makes him confide in himſelf as juſt, deſpiſe others, and aſk nothing of God: Hence he is rejected by heaven; and while he preſumes himſelf rich in virtue and grace, is declared to have none.

But now, if we turn to the *Publican*, we find him taking quite another method; he has a true ſenſe of his unworthineſs and ſins; and therefore, though he venture to come into the temple of God, yet he ſtands afar off at a diſtance from the altar; he dares not look to heaven, but ſtriking his breaſt, cries out, God be merciful to me, a ſinner. All is humility in him; and this, joined with a confidence in God, obtains that mercy which he ſeeks. Where there is the true Spirit of repentance, this will give penitents ſuch a ſenſible conviction of their miſery, as, without any other ſentence, to judge themſelves unworthy of all favours; and therefore not only to ſubmit with peace, when the participation of the ſacred myſteries is forbidden them for a time, that they may prepare for the more worthy approaching to them; but likewiſe, to paſs this ſentence on themſelves, that ſo the ſenſe of their unworthineſs making a ſtronger impreſſion in their ſouls, they may be more fearful of relapſing, and move God to compaſſion by this humility.

As humility is the effect of true repentance, ſo likewiſe is hope; and therefore the *Publican* turning to God, and petitioning for mercy, ſhews all penitents what they ought to do. Grief for ſin without hope,

is confuſion and deſpair, but not repentance. Nothing is more injurious to God, than to ſet bounds to his mercy, and to ſuppoſe his hatred againſt ſinners inflexible. He hates ſin, but he cannot hate the ſinner, any longer than the ſin ſubſiſts in him: If therefore his heart be truly converted from ſin, he ought to have confidence in God; for this converſion being an effect of God's love, it is unreaſonable to think he cannot obtain of him pardon for ſin, of whom he has already obtained the change of his heart.

With theſe diſpoſitions, then, of humility, ſorrow, and hope, the *Publican* came to the temple, and returned home juſtified. With the ſame ought every ſinner to preſent himſelf before God, who deſires the ſame mercy. Deliver us, O God, from all preſumption and vain confidence in ourſelves; lead us into all good; but make us ever ſenſible there can be no true virtue, where there is not true humility; let this accompany us at all times, but more eſpecially, when we come to the temple to pray; and let a firm hope be joined with this, when we aſk for mercy, that we may be thus delivered from the guilt of our ſins, and with the *Publican*, return juſtified.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* xv. 1. Ends verſe 10.

BRETHREN, *I declare to you the Goſpel which I have preached to you, and you have received, and in which you ſtand firm: by which alſo you are ſaved, if you remember in what manner I have preached unto you: Otherwiſe you have believed in vain.* It is by the Goſpel Chriſtians are to be ſaved: By this we have the knowledge of eternal happineſs, and endleſs miſery; by this we are taught the way to eſcape the one, and inherit the other: By this we learn Jeſus Chriſt, through whom we are to obtain the poſſeſſion of everlaſting bliſs, and be delivered from all evils; by this we are inſtructed how to love Jeſus Chriſt, in the clear diſcovery of his infinite mercy and goodneſs, in all he has done and ſuffered for us: And whoever loves him not, has not yet fully received the Goſpel; it being not the words of it in the memory, but its doctrine

in the heart, that is to work our ſalvation: For the heart being the ſeat of good and evil, all the ſaving remedies of the Goſpel, however powerful in themſelves, if they enter not there, are not capable of giving health to our ſouls; in this manner then it is, that the Goſpel is to ſave us.

And now, ſince it has pleaſed the infinite goodneſs of God to let us have this doctrine of ſalvation committed to writing, for our comfort, edification, and inſtruction, what great reverence ought Chriſtians to have to that ſacred volume, never taking it into their hands, but with a reſpect due to the mercies it contains, and with a ſincere deſire of being refreſhed and comforted with the waters of that fountain of life; thence to be poſſeſſed with a true ſenſe of God's goodneſs, a fear of his judgments, a hatred for ſin, a love of virtue, a true value for humility and meekneſs, a contempt of this world and its delights, and a willingneſs to ſacrifice this life for the purchaſe of a better? Theſe leſſons are taught in every page of holy writ, and no queſtion but ſuch as peruſe it with the diſpoſitions of a ſincere, docile, and humble heart, will find the riches of this treaſure in plenty of heavenly bleſſings, and the knowledge of that wiſdom, which will conduct them to a happy

end. But then, how careful ought Chriſtians to be when they come to thoſe myſteries, which are far above the comprehenſion of human reaſon? Here to determine boldly on the confidence of their own ſenſe, is a great preſumption; and to conclude, they have an evident knowledge of them, is an intolerable pride. Were man's reaſon as ſound and perfect as before *Adam*'s fall, it might, with ſome degree of aſſurance, examine into the divine myſteries; but now, wounded, corrupt, and blind as it is, there can be nothing but a vain curioſity and raſhneſs in all its deciſions about ſuch objects, with which it bears no proportion. And though they are delivered in holy writ; yet ſince Providence has ſo ordered it, that they are generally couched and delivered in ſuch expreſſions, as are interpreted both by the learned and unlearned, even contrary ways, which way ſhall the private reader, on the ſtrength of his own judgment, put an end to theſe debates, and in every particular myſtery pronounce poſitively, This is certainly the truth; this is the ſenſe of Chriſt and his apoſtles? Whoever does this, comes very much indiſpoſed to the reading this divine book; whilſt, inſtead of having a true ſenſe of their own weakneſs, and humbling themſelves in the preſence of incomprehen-

ſible Majeſty, they approach to it with pride, and a very unjuſt confidence in the certainty of their own thoughts, which, in regard of what they here undertake, are blindneſs and darkneſs.

And then, how raſhly do they expoſe themſelves to that curſe pronounced by St *John*, in the laſt chapter of the *Revelations*? For if he that adds or takes away from the words of that book, ſhall have his part taken out of the book of life; ſhall not they meet with the like ſeverity, who add or take away from the *ſenſe* and *meaning* of this book; ſince the *words* being only as it were the ſhell, the *ſenſe* and *truths* contained in them, are the ſubſtance of God's word, and that which gives life to the ſoul? And how obvious is it for bold interpreters to do this; ſince there being but *one true ſenſe* of ſcripture, in relation to all thoſe important points debated amongſt Chriſtians, whoever expounds it different from that one ſenſe, which is the truth, moſt certainly adds or takes away from the ſenſe, which is the life and ſpirit of the holy ſcriptures? How inconſiderate then, and truly forgetful of the depth of God's myſteries, and of their own weakneſs, muſt they be, who, with a ſort of groundleſs aſſurance, undertake this taſk, and venture the drawing

down the wrath of God, by their blind preſumption?

It was ſomething like this, of which St *Paul* here cautions the *Corinthians*, telling them, they were to be ſaved by the Goſpel, but with this condition, if they remembered in what manner he had preached it to them, and that otherwiſe they would believe in vain: In this plainly declaring, that however there was ſalvation in the Goſpel, yet it would not be ſo to them, if they believed it not in the manner he had delivered it. Now the caſe of every reader and interpreter of holy writ, is the very ſame with the *Corinthians*: If they underſtand it otherwiſe than the apoſtles taught it, their belief is not to ſalvation, but in vain; a terrible ſentence, but what God himſelf has pronounced, and ſtands here recorded, to deter every reader from all manner of preſumption, inſpire them with a juſt humility and diſtruſt of themſelves, and put them upon ſeeking the moſt aſſured means of underſtanding it in the ſame manner as was delivered by the apoſtles; ſince none but this can poſſibly be the doctrine of Chriſt; and whatever is not this, however ſeemingly the ſenſe of ſcripture, muſt unavoidably be error and hereſy, which, as this ſame

apoſtle ſays in another place, is a ſin that excludes from heaven.

This, then, being alike the concern of all Chriſtians, they ought ſeriouſly to examine what aſſurance they have, that, amongſt ſo many different expoſitions of ſcripture, that ſenſe in which they underſtand it, is certainly the ſame that was taught by the apoſtles. I know every one here will be ſo favourable to his own judgment, as to conclude, that to be the ſenſe of the apoſtles, in which he underſtands the ſcripture: But what aſſurance is this, which is nothing but the poſitiveneſs of his own thoughts; and is evidently conſiſtent with the groſſeſt errors; ſince all the contradictory expoſitions of holy writ are ever accompanied with a poſitive belief of their being the ſenſe of the apoſtles, in all the abettors of the different ſects in the world?

What ground of certainty then can there poſſibly be of believing the ſcriptures in the manner as was taught by the apoſtles, if there cannot be a confidence repoſed in the poſitive judgments of men, after a ſincere peruſal, and comparing one place with another? It is plain, I think, *this certainty* cannot be given by the determination of *ſincerity* and *learning*; becauſe there are numbers of *learned*, and, I hope, *ſincere* men on all

ſides, maintaining contrary doctrines, as the ſenſe of ſcripture and apoſtles, and all equally venturing their ſalvation on the truth of what they teach; and yet it cannot all poſſibly be as they ſay it is; and therefore *this certainty* muſt neceſſarily come ſome other way; and that is, either by a delivery of the ſenſe of the apoſtles by the faithful of all ages ſince their time, which is called *Tradition*; or by the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, certainly concurring in the expoſition of it, who may be a ſecurity againſt all miſtakes. Theſe ways afford us the ſureſt grounds of this certainty: For, as the bible itſelf has been delivered down to us by the faithful of all ages, and is therefore acknowledged by us to be the word of God; ſo by the ſame way the true ſenſe of it, as taught by the apoſtles, may be delivered down to us; and this is to have the ſame authority for the *ſenſe*, as we have for the *book*. And as for the aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit in the interpretation of ſcripture, there is no queſtion, but where there is a certainty of his guidance, there is likewiſe a certainty of divine truths contained in holy writ; ſince he is the beſt expoſitor of ſcripture, who firſt directed the apoſtles in the penning of it.

By theſe ways we may come to a certain-

ty, as to the matter propoſed: But then thoſe who deſire to be ſatisfied of the ſenſe of ſcripture, as it has been delivered by the faithful in all ages, muſt enquire there, where there has been a conſtant ſucceſſion of faithful in all ages; for certainly no communion can give an authentic teſtimony of a truth having been thus believed and delivered in all ages, which can produce no evidence for itſelf, of its having been in all ages. And thoſe who deſire to be aſſured of the ſenſe of ſcripture, from the certain aſſiſtance of the Holy Spirit, muſt enquire there, where there is a claim to this aſſiſtance, and an entire dependence on it. And ſince no communion of Chriſtians can evidence its viſible ſucceſſion, government, and authority in all ages, but the Catholic; and no other acknowledges a certain aſſiſtance of the Holy Ghoſt, as Chriſt promiſed, for its ever teaching the truth, and perpetual ſecurity from error, but this; I cannot find, how there can be a certain aſſurance of the ſenſe of the holy ſcriptures in the manner as was taught by the apoſtles, but only in this communion; ſince all others either abſolutely diſown theſe only means capable of giving this aſſurance, or weakly pretend to them without proof. It is thus, bleſſed apoſtle of the gentiles, I have learned the

ſcriptures

scriptures, thus I remember them, in the manner thou hast preached them, and thus I firmly hope to be saved by them. Grant, blessed Redeemer, that no pride, self-conceit, or fond opinion of my own private judgment, may ever put me out of this way, grant the like mercy to all.

Eleventh Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Mark vii. 31. To the End.

THEY *bring to Jeſus one deaf and dumb, and beſeech him to lay his hand upon him.* Jeſus could have cured this man by his word, or by touching him, as was deſired: But inſtead of this, ſee what the Goſpel relates: He took him apart from the multitude, put his finger into his ears, with his ſpittle touched his tongue, he looked up to heaven, ſighed, and then ſaid to him, *Ephpheta*, that is, be thou opened; upon which the man was reſtored to his hearing and ſpeech, and ſpoke well. In which actions Chriſt gives authority to all thoſe ceremonies, which, by his example, the church has at all times uſed in the adminiſtration of baptiſm; which, however ſubject to the railleries of ignorance, and excepted againſt as unneceſſary and unprofitable, are here both juſtified and ſanctified. And have not here the miniſters of Chriſt their model, for being men of deſires, of prayer, and of

ſighs; that when they exerciſe their functions, and perform the ceremonies of the ſacraments and ſacrifice, and pronounce words and prayers over ſinners, in the name and authority of Jeſus Chriſt; they ought to raiſe up their hearts to heaven, ſighing for thoſe whom they have under their hands, and entirely depending on his bleſſing, who is the maſter of hearts.

Have not here again all Chriſtians ſufficient reaſon to apprehend the danger of all thoſe diſtempers which affect the ears and the tongue, and to conſider the difficulty of their cure? For ſince all thoſe ceremonies were not neceſſary for the cure of the man that was brought before Chriſt, they have reaſon to underſtand them as inſtructions given to them; not to look on thoſe evils as inconſiderable in themſelves, or eaſy in their remedy, which here in their figure only ſeemed to demand, not only the word, but the labour of Chriſt, and the whole power of heaven for their relief.

Ought not then every one on this day to conſider the diſtempers of theſe two faculties of hearing and ſpeaking, and then ſee if they are ſo far concerned in them as to ſtand in need of his help who was the phyſician of this poor man? It is one diſtemper of hearing to be pleaſed with prophane or

irreligious diſcourſe; another, to be ſatisfied with what entrenches upon modeſty; another, to have the ears open to detraction; another, to be delighted with flattery; another, to admit of whiſperers, and thoſe who are informers of the ſecrets of other families. It is another general diſtemper to be greedy of all worldly entertainments, ſuch as afford proper matter for ſtrengthening all paſſions, ſuch as are grateful to vanity, ambition, envy, ſenſuality; ſuch as link the ſoul faſter to earth, and give it a diſlike of all that is edifying or inſtructive. The diſtempers of the tongue are too well known to need here a particular liſt, becauſe this member publiſhes its own diſorders in ſwearing, curſing, prophaneneſs, abuſing God's holy name, in lying, backbiting; filthy words, diſcourſes, and jeſts; in animoſities, quarrels, making diviſions, and concurring to all manner of evils, and being generally buſied in recommending and magnifying thoſe things of the world which ought moſt to be deſpiſed.

There is no glancing at theſe evils; but they appear ſo numerous and ſpreading, that it is ſcarce a queſtion whether any be wholly exempt from them; but, however, they are not our preſent concern, who accidentally, by ſurpriſe or overſight, fall under ſome of their guilt; for what is a paſſing ac-

cident cannot be called a diſeaſe. But ſuch other Chriſtians are here in particular called upon, who obſerve themſelves under the cuſtom of any of theſe evils; for ſuch a cuſtom betraying a ſettled diſorder in them, it is an evident argument of their being in want of a good phyſician's help; and if they had any friends, I think theſe would direct them to take his advice, who in this Goſpel has given ſuch demonſtration of his goodneſs, of his power, and of his ſkill.

If they come to him with the poor man here mentioned, and demand his help, he does not with his word command away their evil, but taking them by the hand, leads them into a better air; he will not have them breathe in a crowd, but ſets them at a diſtance, where with more freedom of ſpirit they may attend to his preſcriptions, and the method of their cure. The world is ſo corrupt, that there is no ill cuſtom but what is juſtified by example, and there needs no more to be led out of the way, than to do what others do. The vicious have here the encouragement of others like themſelves; and the failings or overſights of ſuch as are reputed good are taken up for a rule by thoſe who have not courage to do amiſs but by example. Whence there are few, who being either checked by the doubts of their

own conſcience, or reproved by others, do not preſently ſhelter themſelves under this ſalvo, That ſuch others do the ſame. And is it not here that many evils find protection; as detraction, lying, prophaning God's holy name, uncharitableneſs, animoſities, quarrels, and many practices which are fraudulent and unjuſt? Is it not by this deceitful argument are kept up, as innocent, all the methods of vanity, prodigality, ambition, covetouſneſs, intemperance, and all the ways of a diſſipated, idle, and uprofitable life? Is it not by the ſame the Goſpel is grown out of faſhion; and to pretend to live up to its maxims is enough to be cenſured for bigotry, and to be pointed at as a mark of reproach.

This certainly is the ſtate of the Chriſtian world, ſo that whoever thinks of following it, will never learn to ſpeak or hear aright. It is no wonder then, Chriſt took this man out of the crowd that was to be cured; for though this was not neceſſary for him, who could as eaſily, even there, have reſtored him to his ſenſes; yet it was a neceſſary inſtruction for all thoſe who, lying under the like infirmities, ſhould in ſucceeding ages deſire to be cured. And the inſtruction is this; That the common ways of the world being corrupt, they are bound to withdraw from them; and by conſidering, in retirement of

ſpirit, the ways of Chriſt, learn from him how to hear and ſpeak.

But if they obſerve this preſcription, they muſt ſtill remember it is by the finger of God, that is, by his Holy Spirit, they are to receive their cure. They are to uſe human means, as reading, adviſing, and keeping a watch upon themſelves; but no effect can be expected from theſe, if the operation of the Holy Spirit be not joined with them, in changing their hearts, and by powerful impreſſions of grace, giving them a conſtancy of mind, by which they may be confirmed againſt all the temptations of their own weakneſs and of the world.

As therefore they ſee Chriſt in working this miracle lifting up his eyes to heaven, and ſighing; ſo they may be aſſured this grace of the Holy Spirit is not to be obtained but by prayers and ſighs; and that if they do not thus manifeſt the true ſenſe they have of their misfortune, and the ſincere deſire of being delivered from it, they are ſtill likely to lie under their diſtemper: Chriſt wanted none of theſe helps; and whatever he did of this kind, was only to inform us what we are to do. And therefore, as for thoſe who ſeemingly deſire remedy of their ſpiritual evils, and only make this the ſubject of paſſing thoughts, and of ſome cuſtomary pray-

ers, in which the ſenſe of their misfortune is ſo little, that they are ſcarce ſenſible of what they aſk. I am certain they are not taught thus by Chriſt; and I fear, as they depart from his example, and the preſcriptions of this their phyſician, ſo there can be little hopes of their amendment from ſuch imperfect endeavours. Teach us, O God, to be ſenſible of the diſtempers of our ſoul, and now more eſpecially of our ears and tongue; and ſince thou haſt ſhewed us the method of our cure, give us grace to practiſe it, that following thy directions, we may have juſt hopes of amendment; for we know that hope is groundleſs, when we expect thy grace, and go on ſtill in our own ways, and not in thine.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

2 *Cor.* iii. 4. Ends verſe 9.

NOT *that we are able to think any thing of ourſelves, as of ourſelves; but our ſufficiency is from God.* There can be no ſolid hopes of advancing in a virtuous life, except this foundation be firſt laid, that we can do no good of ourſelves, but that all is to come from God, as the effects of his grace, even to our very thoughts, which are the ſeed and firſt beginnings of virtue. For it is this grounds the Chriſtian in a true humility, makes him ever diſtruſt himſelf; delivers him from all raſhneſs, confidence, and preſumption; preſerves him in a wholeſome fear; makes him in all things depend on God; and this dependence keeps him watchful in his duty, and apprehenſive of diſpleaſing him, who has all in his hands. It is in conſequence of this that he is conſtant in his prayers, and in all thoſe means the divine goodneſs has appointed for obtaining his grace; that he undertakes no-

thing that ſeems to be his duty, without firſt imploring his aſſiſtance; and in indifferent things ever deſires his protection, as knowing, by a chain of hidden conſequences, the whole ſtate of life, and very conſiderable engagements, many times to depend on theſe; that he is very cautious how he expoſes himſelf to what in himſelf or others he experiences to be the occaſion of ſin; that he carefully puts by all complaiſance in that good he has done, as likewiſe what naturally ariſes from the commendation or good opinion of others; becauſe he is ſenſible this is an injuſtice to God, in taking to himſelf what belongs to him; and finally, that he is not ſurpriſed at his own weakneſs, nor anxiouſly diſquieted at the obſervation of repeated failings, becauſe he knows himſelf to be miſery and corruption; and there can be no wonder, that what is weak, is ſubject to weakneſs; and if there be any wonder, it is what is cauſed by pride, which is ever unwilling to acknowledge this great infirmity, and is very impatient under it.

In this manner the knowledge and confeſſion of our own inability and nothing is the foundation of all virtue, as pride is the root of all ſin; and it is the great mercy of God, by variety of expedients, to preſerve

us in this knowledge of ourſelves, and by our daily experience, to ſecure us againſt that pride which ſo naturally ſteals upon us for our ruin. This advantage the divine goodneſs deſigns us in the many troubleſome temptations which moleſt us; in that dryneſs, tepidity, and ſeeming withdrawings of inward comfort, which often follow us; in thoſe infirmities we fall into after our repeated and ſtrongeſt reſolutions; in the darkneſs of our thoughts; in our ſtupendous and almoſt univerſal ignorance, as to every thing that belongs to God and our own good; in the uncertainty of our repentance, and the doubts we labour under, in whatever we do to ſecure our future ſtate; in our diſappointments, afflictions, pains, ſickneſſes, and in all his ſcourges. It is for this ſame motive of humbling us he has appointed the moſt effectual means of grace in the weakeſt and moſt contemptible elements, and obliges us to have recourſe to theſe for our help and remedy: For this he made choice of poor, ignorant, and ſimple fiſhermen, to be our teachers, and ſubjects the moſt learned to be their ſcholars: For this has he centered all virtue in the contempt of whatever is eſteemed great, and declared the wiſdom of the world to be folly, and the fooliſhneſs of this world to be the wiſdom he approves,

and the only security we can have of being for ever happy.

This method has God chosen to keep us humble; and amongst all Christians, only those are happy and wise, who take the advantage of all these particulars, to ground themselves in the knowledge of that nothing which they are, and to grow daily in their dependence on God; so that, instead of thinking themselves unhappy in those things of which the world generally complains, as of temptations, uncertainties, ignorance, darkness, infirmities, *&c.* They make this one use of them all, to turn them into occasions of perpetual humiliation under the hand of God; and thus make them serve, as so many steps whereby they approach still nearer to heaven, and trust more in God, the less they have to trust in themselves. Thus their very miseries become blessings, and all co-operate to their good.

And this, I do not question, is the design of Almighty God, in many considerable infirmities he permits in his best servants while as yet on earth; especially in that great darkness, dimness, and want of all sense and comfort, which for a long time many find in their prayers, and all exercises of devotion: All this being very often an expedient of mercy, not only to try their

fidelity and patience in ſerving him, without any ſort of ſatisfaction, or ſigns of benefit; but alſo to ground them ſtill more and more in a ſolid humility, and eſtabliſh them in a total dependence on him. I am very ſenſible how great a trial this is, and how great grace is neceſſary for their ſupport in this ſtate of barrenneſs: and while it is food for the ſtrongeſt, that it is apt to cauſe anxiety in beginners, and even give them ſuch diſcouragements, as to think all to be loſt, and conclude God to be angry with them, and that for this reaſon he is deaf to their prayers, and gives them over to a hard heart, and a reprobate ſenſe. This is too often the effect of this trial in unexperienced Chriſtians, who have therefore reaſon to be under the conduct of a very ſkilful director, and entirely depend on his advice, and not on the ſuggeſtions of their own fears. By ſuch a one they will be inſtructed, not unprofitably, to lament their ſpiritual misfortune, but effectually to remove whatever in themſelves they can diſcover to be the occaſion of it: And if they can make no ſuch diſcovery, then to humble themſelves, and even rejoice in the experience of their own nothing, hoping that God is preparing them for ſignal bleſſings, who thus in a particular manner convinces

them, that of themſelves they can do nothing: That therefore they ought to go on with courage, reſolving to comply with the will of God, who requires of them to pray as long as they live: That they muſt perform this as well as they can, without diſquieting themſelves at their imperfections; ever endeavouring to perform their obligation, without being concerned whether it be with comfort, or without comfort, whether they be in light or darkneſs, in joy or ſadneſs; and this is to go on by the light of faith, being conſtant in every duty, without any recompenſe in this life, or aſſurance having done them well, but only what faith gives, and not ſenſe: And thus ſuffering all the ſeeming withdrawings of grace with patience, and quietly ſubmitting to the appointments of God, they need not doubt of being as acceptable to him, as thoſe that perform all their exerciſes of piety with a moſt lively and ſenſible devotion: and that by owning in a profound humility, that they cannot pray, they offer up a moſt acceptable prayer.

Neither let theſe torment themſelves with the apprehenſions of God being angry with them, and of their hearts being hardened; for it being evident, that all their trouble, anxiety, and dejection, ariſes from no other head, than the concern they have for not

ſerving God as they ought, and the fear of having offended him; that they earneſtly deſire to be delivered from their evils, ſeek and enquire for remedy, and are ever with ſorrow lamenting their misfortune; it is very plain, ſuch hearts as are affected with theſe pious paſſions, cannot be hardened, nor poſſibly be the object of God's anger. No, theſe hearts are certainly right with God, and though they are wrought upon by an exceſs of apprehenſion, fear, and ſolicitude, and are diſordered through an *indiſcreet management*, yet theſe being rather weakneſſes than ſin, they have great reaſon to hope with an entire confidence in God, and expect, that after ſuch a trial, the divine light, attended with heavenly comforts, will again ſhine upon them and refreſh their ſouls. Let them be conſtant in all duties, performing them with a true humility and ſenſe of their own nothing, though without any ſenſible devotion, and I queſtion not, but all will end well; and though death ſhould carry them away even under this want of internal comfort, however it might ſeem terrifying to them, yet I ſhould not doubt upon this ſcore, of their dying the death of the juſt.

Twelfth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke x. 23. Ends verſe 37.

MASTER, *What ſhall I do to obtain life everlaſting?* This queſtion was propoſed to Chriſt, by a doctor of the law. I wiſh all of his profeſſion would aſk the ſame queſtion; becauſe they have ſo much encouragement to injuſtice, and ſo much intereſt in oppreſſion, that they are in perpetual hazard of putting the next life to the venture, to be gainers in this. And here is one great part of their misfortune, that, as this doctor of the law knew it his duty to love God above all things, and his neighbour as himſelf, yet did not know who his neighbour was: So theſe, though they may have a general ſenſe of what is due to God and their neighbour, yet they ſeldom know who their neighbour is; being ever ready to keep open the wounds of the miſerable, and increaſe the burthen of the oppreſſed; if any are ſuch ill Chriſtians as to make

them gainers by this inhumanity; and not only ſo, but likewiſe by ſtudied delays, to prolong their misfortune, whom they undertake to help. This is far from the practice of what Chriſt recommends in this Goſpel, that whatever their belief be who live under the guilt of it, I fear they never aſk the queſtion, What they ſhall do to obtain life everlaſting; but rather ſeem to have renounced all hopes of it: For that being a kingdom of juſtice, truth, and mercy, how are they in the way to it, who are ever prepared, upon the encouragement of a fee, to undertake any cauſe, even when innocence, truth, and juſtice ſtand evident againſt them? Thus they do not know their neighbour, but themſelves only.

And I fear, it is not only their caſe, but that all other profeſſions are to be ſuſpected. For though being induſtrious in gaining a livelihood, be not only commendable, but duty; yet when I conſider, how covetouſneſs, and the immoderate deſire of gain put the profeſſors upon many unwarrantable methods; that frauds, counterfeits, and injuſtice, are generally mixed with all they do; ſo that almoſt every ſhop that is open, is become like a trap to catch the ignorant, or the unwary; and thoſe that ſtand in them, ſeem to wait for thoſe whom they may over-

reach or deceive; here I cannot but apprehend, they know not who their neighbour is; and that being ever ready to do to others, what they would have no others do to them, they are unacquainted with this precept of charity, which obliges them to love their neighbour as themſelves.

It is very likely, they are perſuaded they cannot otherwiſe live, and be provided with preſent neceſſaries, or againſt future caſualties, and therefore, that neceſſity is their warrant. But if they bring the method of their lives to the teſt of the Goſpel, will they then tell me, that their neceſſities are not of their own making? Will it not then appear, that it is not the neceſſities of life, but their intemperance, gluttony, ambition, pride, envy, *&c.* that put them upon theſe unjuſtifiable ways for their ſupport? But if the ſolicitude for life were really their temptation, ought not they to break the force of this, by reflecting that they have another life to provide for, as well as this? Ought not they to aſk, with this lawyer, What they are to do to gain life eternal, as well as how to live here; and thus give a check to all thoſe ſuggeſtions, which are for ſecuring this life, with the loſs of the other? Certainly thoſe, who have a true faith in God, ought likewiſe to have ſo much hope in him,

that if, in obedience to his law, and for the love of juſtice, they renounce ſo much of their preſent intereſt, as is the fruit of injuſtice, he will give a bleſſing to their more moderate gain, ſuch as will carry them through the difficulties of this life, and be their ſubſtantial comfort at the hour of death; when they ſhall have a proſpect of treaſures laid up in heaven, by all the unlawful advantages they have renounced, and the inconveniencies they have ſuffered, rather than offend againſt juſtice, and tranſgreſs that precept of charity, which obliges them to love their neighbour as themſelves, and never to advance themſelves by wronging him.

But this obligation is not confined to theſe profeſſions; all that hope for eternal life, are bound to ſeek it by the love of God, and of their neighbour; and becauſe the former is beſt manifeſted by the latter, therefore it is the common intereſt of all, to know who their neighbour is, that ſo they may ſatisfy the obligation of loving him, and have that great argument of the love of God abiding in them. To anſwer this queſtion in general, Chriſt has here propoſed the parable of the man, who falling among thieves, and being wounded by them, was paſt by, unregarded, by the prieſt and

Levite, and was helped by the *Samaritan*, who, compaſſionating his misfortune, took care of him: In which he has taught us, that to Chriſtians it is not nearneſs of dwelling or blood, nor acquaintance, nor affection, nor friendſhip, nor dependence, makes neighbours, but that they are to eſteem all their neighbours, who are in want of their help, and whom they are any ways capable of helping. Whence the poor are always to be eſteemed neighbours by the rich, the ſick by thoſe in health, the priſoner by the free, the ignorant by the learned, the afflicted and comfortleſs by ſuch as are in peace of mind, the erring Chriſtians by thoſe who are in they way of truth, and the ſinner by the juſt. And as the *Samaritan*, upon ſeeing the diſtreſs of the perſon before him, preſently ran to his aſſiſtance, without aſking queſtions who he was; or of what place or religion? So all Chriſtians, upon the conviction of others wanting their help, ought to contribute to it, without farther enquiry; for that their neceſſities ſhew them to be their neighbours; and there can be no other proof of the love of their neighbour being in them, than by concurring, according to their preſent abilities to their preſent wants. And though this be called charity, yet there is ſomething of juſtice in

it; inaſmuch as man, being indebted to God, ſo that all is his due; God has ſubſtituted our neighbour in his place, with a power of claiming what belongs to him; this claim he puts in, when his neceſſities are manifeſted to us; then it is he demands his right, if not upon his own account, at leaſt upon that deputation which God has given him. Whence compaſſion becomes a debt, and not an arbitrary ſervice; and there needs no more than to be miſerable, to have a right to the compaſſion of others, and to what help they can give. And thus, Chriſtians, by helping their neighbour, diſcharge that debt which they owe to God; and to remove all doubts on this account, Chriſt has already ſigned a general acquittance, wherein he owns the receipt of all, that has been thus given, *Whatever ye have done to any of theſe little ones, you have done to me.*

Chriſt having thus poſitively declared who our neighbour is, and as poſitively in what manner we are to expreſs our love to him, and then concluding his inſtruction with this command, *Vade et tu fac ſimiliter: Go and do thus.* He has in this given directions to Chriſtians what his will and their duty is, and ſo expreſsly ſhewn the neceſſity of practiſing this part of charity, that it

cannot be apprehended how they can have hopes of happineſs, who are are not ſolicitous in the practice of it.

Thoſe who have any part of this ſolicitude, cannot but ſee that compaſſion is the firſt diſpoſition towards it; and therefore nothing more diſagreeable to the Chriſtian temper than hard-heartedneſs, roughneſs, and to have no ſenſe of others misfortunes: That no Chriſtians ought to tolerate this in themſelves, and much leſs bear with the leaſt ſigns of it in their children, or ſuch as are under their care; for that this growing up and ſtrengthening with years will make them intolerably in love with themſelves, and careleſs of all others; and how then are they likely to be charitably zealous in helping their neighbour in his misfortunes, who know not what compaſſion is, and are not touched with any miſery which they feel not themſelves? As this then is to be diſcountenanced, ſo likewiſe all contempt of perſons in affliction or poverty, all harſhneſs to the poor: And how much more all the ſuggeſtions of envy, hatred, and malice, by which Chriſtians, inſtead of helping, are the contrivers of their neighbours misfortunes? Much more there is of this kind quite oppoſite to the ſpirit of charity, and yet ſo frequent amongſt thoſe who know there can

be no ſalvation where there is not charity, that we have reaſon to pray for others, and ſuſpect ourſelves, who are ever ingenious in deceiving our own ſouls, and finding reaſons for diſpenſing with this precept, which will admit of no exception. Leave us not, O God, to our own falſe reaſoning in this point; but as thou haſt ſhewn us, both who is our neighbour, and how we are to love him, and the neceſſity of loving him, ſo give us grace to practiſe it, that we may ſuppreſs all thoſe paſſions which put us upon being injurious to our neighbour, and learn to love him as we do ourſelves, by being ever fearful of doing harm, and deſirous of doing him good.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Gal. iii. 16. Ends verſe 22.

THE *promiſes were made to Abraham and his ſeed.* St. *Paul* here declares and proves, that the *Jews* were not to build their hopes of ſalvation on the law given to *Moſes*, but on the promiſe God made to *Abraham*, when he ſaid to him, That *in him all nations ſhould be bleſſed*, Gen. xii. 3. That therefore they were not to be juſtified by the *law*, but by their *faith* in a Mediator, who was to come of the ſeed of *Abraham*: For that God having once made this promiſe to him, it could not poſſibly be made void by the law, which was given four hundred and thirty years after; and therefore was ſtill in force, and to be made good; for *though it be but a man's covenant* (ſays the apoſtle here, verſe 15) *yet if it be confirmed, no man diſannulleth or addeth thereto*: How much leſs then can the covenant that was confirmed before of God be diſannulled by the law, and made of no effect? Thus the apoſtle

Apoſtle reaſons in this chapter at length, ſhewing the promiſe of God to be irrevocable, and as unchangeable as God himſelf, on whom alone it depends; and that on their faith in this, their juſtification and ſalvation was to depend. Here is the ground of all the hope and ſalvation belonging to the *Jewiſh* church; their fulfilling all the law, without the faith of a *Meſſias*, in conſequence of God's promiſe, was not ſufficient. And is not this a figure of the covenant made by Chriſt with his Church? He ſolemnly engaged his word, That he would be with his Apoſtles until the end of the world, *Matt.* xxviii. 20. That the Comforter, even the Spirit of Truth, ſhould abide with them for ever, *John* xiv. 16. That the Spirit of Truth ſhould come, and lead them into all truth, *John* xvi. 12. That they ſhould be the light of the world, and ſalt of the earth: That whoever heard them, heard him; and whoever deſpiſed them, deſpiſed him, *Luke* x. 16. This is the promiſe of Chriſt to his church, not only once pronounced, as was that of God to *Abraham*, but ſo many times repeated, abſolutely, and without any condition or reſerve: And who is there can annul this promiſe? God has made it, who

can make it void? If but a man's covenant be once confirmed, no man diſannulleth it, or addeth thereto: Who then can evacuate the covenant of God, thus repeated, confirmed, and eſtabliſhed? No, this is God's word, and though heaven and earth ſhall paſs away, yet his word ſhall never paſs away; but muſt for ever ſtand good, notwithſtanding all opinions, pretexts, or laws of men to the contrary. To build then on this promiſe, is to lay a foundation on a rock; it is to build on God's truth, which is as unchangeable as God: On this I ſtand ſecure, becauſe in this I reſt on God: On this my judgment ſtands firm, and proof againſt all the waverings of human reaſon; becauſe I know all the ſtrength of reaſon is but weakneſs and nothing, if compared to God. It is for this I bleſs God daily, who has not left me to myſelf, and the uncertainty of my own thoughts, to go through the depth of his myſteries, but has promiſed himſelf to be my guide, and by his Holy Spirit abiding with his church, to lead me into all truth; ſo that as he himſelf has created me, as he himſelf has redeemed me, ſo he himſelf has undertaken to be my director in all I am to believe. On this promiſe of his I entirely depend; and whatever

arguments are ſuggeſted to me, pretending to invalidate it, methinks they look to me, as levelled againſt Chriſt himſelf: For if I am to queſtion the truth of this word, how can I firmly believe in him? If I cannot truſt in his promiſe, how can he be a God to me? His *promiſe* is the ground of my *hope*; and if I cannot depend on that, I muſt certainly deſpair: His *promiſe* is the ground of my *faith*, and if I am not to depend on that, I muſt certainly err in my faith, or be an unbeliever. But far be this from me: I confeſs, O my God, Thou art faithful to all thy promiſes, and I believe thee, becauſe thou art the eternal truth. This truth is the ſecurity of my faith, and my hope; and if I once doubt of this, I in this loſe all my hold in thee; and what can I then truſt to? There is nothing in this world, but thou, my God, and thy creatures; if I let go thee, there are nothing but thy creatures left me; and how can I truſt in them, if by them I am taught to diſtruſt in thee? If I cannot depend on thy church, which thou haſt eſtabliſhed and ſecured to me by thy ſacred word and promiſe, for the teaching the world truth to the end of the world; how can I receive that for truth, which is only ſecured to me by the learning and

word of man? This cannot be; and therefore I profeſs, if thou faileſt me, all is loſt to me; if I am to doubt of thy promiſe, I muſt then own myſelf miſerable, and that I have neither faith or hope left within me, the only anchor and ſupport in this ſtate of pilgrimage and darkneſs.

Thus then is the new covenant as well as the old, the chriſtian as well as the *Jewiſh* church, to depend on the promiſes of God, and it is in the faith of theſe is the life of the juſt. And now, while we behold ſo wonderful a fidelity and truth in God, in fulfilling all his promiſes to men, ought not this to be an inſtruction to all chriſtians, of the great exactneſs they are to obſerve, in ſatisfying all the promiſes they make to God? Every promiſe made to God ought to be moſt religiouſly and ſtrictly kept, as being a ſacred tie, by which a chriſtian obliges himſelf to renounce ſomething dangerous, and more cloſely to live to God; and the breach of it is ever accompanied with a ſort of infidelity, very unſuitable to a chriſtian ſtate, as being contrary to that ſimplicity, ſincerity, and truth, which are the attributes of God, and without which a ſoul cannot poſſibly be pleaſing to him. And ſince it brings ſo great an obligation

after it, ought not every one to be very cautious, eſpecially thoſe of unripe and unexperienced years, how they engage themſelves in any kind; or rather never to do it, but with great deliberation, and the beſt advice of thoſe that know them beſt? For want of this, many have raſhly drawn themſelves into great ſnares; and by the heat of a too haſty reſolution of ſeeming good, have become a prey to the deſigns of a ſubtil but malicious enemy, perplexing their conſciences with a weight too heavy to be eaſily removed. All private reſolutions therefore are here to be ſuſpected, however ſeemingly grounded on the proſpect of the greateſt good: And ſince *being directed and adviſed*, is a means appointed us by God, who knows our weakneſs, and by this deſigns to ſecure us againſt all ſnares, why ſhould this be laid aſide in an affair, wherein his honour and our eternal good are ſo much concerned? The beſt advice therefore I can give in this particular is, *That none make any promiſes without advice;* and whatever they conclude within themſelves, that it be ever done with this reſerve; *If it ſhall be approved by their director; or other party, that may be proper in ſuch caſe;* and *otherwiſe not to ſtand good.* This is the ſureſt

way to prevent all raſhneſs and deluſion, and do what may be moſt acceptable to God.

And this is not only adviſable in relation to a religious ſtate; but likewiſe in regard to all other promiſes whatever, whether in order to marriage, office, employment, ſociety, or ſtate of life. For all theſe moſt ſtrictly oblige, when once made, and are ſo great an engagement, that, generally ſpeaking, they are never violated without a ſin, and ſuch a ſin, as ever carries a great aggravation with it, and therefore ought never to be made, but with the advice of the beſt friends, and ſerious conſideration of their own diſpoſitions compared with what they undertake. God likewiſe ought to be conſulted, and his aſſiſtance earneſtly implored by frequent prayers, and an entire abandoning their choice to the direction of his grace: For ſince no promiſes can be duly obſerved, but by his help; how can they reaſonably afterwards expect his help, who without him have firſt engaged themſelves? Is it not hence, many are ſo very unhappy in what they do, meeting with ſuch unexpected difficulties, as not only deſtroy their inward peace, but even put them too often upon living in a per-

petual breach of vow, and thus have temporal and eternal evils the puniſhment of their raſhneſs? O! it is terrible to think how many dreadful miſchiefs are often the conſequence of one falſe ſtep, whilſt like a chain of evils, they follow of courſe, upon faſtening the firſt link, the effect of a blind and haſty reſolution, made upon carnal and worldly motives, but without God. Help us, O God, as far as we are concerned in this misfortune; and as we adore thy truth in all thy promiſes, and on theſe build both our faith and hope; ſo likewiſe direct all thy ſervants, in all the vows and promiſes they make: Deliver them from all raſh and inconſiderate ones: Aſſiſt them in the juſt diſcharge of all they are obliged to by the tie of a deliberate promiſe, make them ſenſible of all they have undertaken, that ſo not failing in their own promiſes, they may never be excluded from the mercy of thine.

Thirteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xvii. 11. Ends verſe 19.

JEſus entering into a certain village, ten lepers met him, who ſtood afar off. In theſe ten unhappy men, united in one body by one common miſery, we may conſider the general union there is amongſt ſinners, through the conformity of their evil inclinations. For though theſe are divided by worldly intereſt, as often as they oppoſe one another's pretenſions, yet there are other reaſons which link them together: As, Firſt, in the perſecution of thoſe who are better than themſelves, and to whom they find a like averſion. Secondly, Becauſe the lives of more exemplary perſons are a reproach to their diſorders, upon which they decline ſuch company, and ſeek others, who being equally criminal, can be no occaſion to them of ſuch confuſion. Thirdly, Becauſe they mutually ſupport and ſtrengthen one ano-

ther in their paſſions, and thus ſtifle that remorſe, which often makes them uneaſy amidſt their wickedneſs.

Upon ſuch motives, we ſee unexemplary chriſtians as ſtrictly aſſociated, and united in bodies, and by rules governing their irregularities, as better chriſtians are by the bonds of charity and faith; and it is by ſuch miſplaced union, they not only preſerve themſelves, but likewiſe become ſo powerful, as eaſily to gain the unwary to their party, and change the averſion of many innocent perſons, into an approbation and love of their moſt unwarrantable practices. And this I find ſo general a ſnare, and the method by which the beſt diſpoſitions are corrupted, and not only reſolutions, but virtue is often overthrown; that I cannot but judge it the moſt neceſſary point of practical wiſdom, both for beginners, proficients, and the moſt advanced in good, to be ſolicitous in the choice of their company; and never to make thoſe their confidents, whoſe vice, weakneſſes, or undiſciplined life, can put them in hazard of ſinking below that perfection, which the goſpel requires for their ſalvation.

This wiſdom the chriſtian is taught by the ſpirit of God, who, ſolicitous for his

eternal good, calls thus upon him: 'Son, 'if ſinners invite thee, yield not to them, 'walk not with them, ſet not thy foot in 'their paths, for their feet run into evil: 'Be not pleaſed in the ways of the wick-'ed; turn away, fly, and forſake them.' This he is taught by the ſame Holy Spirit, who, by *Moſes*, publiſhed a law, ſtrictly forbidding the *Iſraelites* to contract friendſhip with the inhabitants of the land, or to touch any unclean thing. And is not this the inſtruction given by St. *Paul* to all the faithful? *Brethren, we declare to you, in the name of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that you withdraw yourſelves from every brother that walks diſorderly, and not according to the tradition they have received from us.* In infinite other places is the like advice given to the profeſſors of the goſpel; and the deſign of it being in charity to their ſouls, for preventing that ruin they would otherwiſe draw upon themſelves; by conſequence, all ſuch as are ſincerely deſirous to ſave their ſouls, muſt obſerve the preſcription, in being very cautious in the choice of their friendſhip and converſation, and not leave that to inclination, which is both blind and lame, on which eternity ſo much depends.

Whence it is very evident, all thoſe muſt be charged with great indiſcretion, who, upon any change of place or abode, are forward in ſettling a friendſhip with ſuch, in whom they find a preſent agreeableneſs, before they have had ſufficient experience for the trial of their principles: Since it is moſt certain, the flatteries of natural accompliſhments, or artificial men, have drawn in many raſhly to confide in thoſe, who have nothing ſubſtantial in them to anſwer the firſt invitation; but by falſeneſs, fraud, vice, or indiſcretion, have brought weighty inconveniencies on their haſty admirers, to pay for the folly of their choice.

Secondly, All thoſe muſt be arraigned, who, after a commendable education, being now, by the privilege of their years, at liberty in the choice of their company, aſſociate themſelves with ſuch, whoſe age and ingenuity, with other modiſh accompliſhments, render them agreeable; but being wholly influenced by the principles of the world, and not of the goſpel, are fit for nothing but to make their followers ſkilled in all the arts of ſelf-love, pride, ambition, prodigality, ſenſuality, idleneſs and eaſe; and to think of nothing beyond courting this world and

themſelves. For what can be the effect of ſuch converſation, but to learn by example, and let the preſent impreſſions take place of all whatever they have been taught of good, to the contempt of religion, and all thoſe exerciſes, on which their ſalvation depends? This is ſo far true in fact, that I believe there are none but who can give ſome inſtances of it amongſt their acquaintance, ſufficient to oblige thoſe to be upon the watch, who have the charge of youth on their hands; and I cannot but think, that had thoſe of youthful years, who are now ſtepping into the world, a true information of ſuch as, in their circumſtances, are by the indiſcreet choice of company, drawn into all manner of wickedneſs, there might be hopes, the proſpect of ſo many loſt ſouls would teach them to be more cautious, than raſhly there to expoſe themſelves, where they have ſo much ruin before them.

Thirdly, The method of thoſe is to be reproved, who entering upon the paſtoral charge, and having ſome general ſenſe of its difficulties, and of themſelves being not yet well acquainted with its duties, ſeek not out thoſe of their coat for companions, whoſe experience has fitted them for giving them light, and whoſe laborious zeal may raiſe in them a deſire of following

their apoſtolic ſteps; but rather enter into ſuch clubs, where there is more to be learned of a worldly than eccleſiaſtic ſpirit; and here initiating themſelves, grow in love with an idle and unactive life, and are in danger of forgetting by degrees, that they have the charge of other ſouls upon their hands. There is ſo much of ill management in this, that, I fear, ſome never live to recover the ill conſequences of this firſt falſe ſtep. And if I here leave it, with all the ſolemnity of my laſt requeſt, to all thoſe who are to follow, that they would make a better choice of their company, and never prophane the ſanctity of their undertaking, by entering into ſuch diſ-edifying meetings; but rather ſeek out thoſe, who will give both light and heat; I queſtion not, but the advantages found by thoſe who ſhall follow the advice, will oblige them to return me both thanks and prayers for my legacy.

Laſtly, The method of the generality of chriſtians is to be cenſured, who, being ſubject to failings, are commonly induſtrious in finding out others, under whoſe authority and example they make their defence againſt the arguments of their uneaſy conſcience, and by whoſe converſation they may be rather encouraged in taking greater liberties, than reproached for ſuch as already deſerve it. This is the

unhappy expedient by which moſt chriſtians confirm themſelves, if not improve in their weakneſſes: They herd with others like themſelves, from whom they can neither fear reproach, nor expect advice; and thus by their ill choice, are more in danger of growing worſe, than in circumſtances of ever ariſing above thoſe imperfections, which ſink them below their duty. It is by this way the vicious are ſtrengthened in their vices, ſo as to be hardened againſt the advice of friends, and the light of grace, with which God is pleaſed mercifully to touch them: And by the ſame is kept up that worldly ſpirit, and imperfect notion of a chriſtian life amongſt others, who ſenſible of the difficulty of riſing above what they are, cannot be pleaſed with any company, but ſuch as know how to ridicule every profeſſor, whoſe life is a reproach to theirs.

Thus, I believe, it muſt be acknowledged a general truth, that company is the beginning or improvement of all degrees of evil; and that conſequently, it is a particular point of wiſdom, in all that are in earneſt with ſalvation, to be very cautious in the company they chooſe. There is an obligation of avoiding thoſe

who are ſcandalouſly vicious; and it is not much leſs, as to declining ſuch, by whoſe converſation we are likely to become leſs chriſtians than we are; or have that encouraged which is not good in us. But as for thoſe who make heaven their buſineſs, they will not only go thus far, but ever be deſirous of ſuch company as are better than themſelves, from whoſe inſtruction they may be informed of their failings, and by example be ſpurred on to the labours neceſſary for approaching nearer to the life of Chriſt and his goſpel. This is the way both for eccleſiaſtics and laity, by which they may hope to become living members of Chriſt's myſtical body, and, in their ſeveral ſtations, edify both God and man. But as for all thoſe, who, either fond of their own corruptions, or not deſirous of amendment, decline the converſation of ſuch as are likely to do them good, the buſineſs of eternity ſeems ſo little their concern, that I cannot but ſuſpect their lot; and let them ſee, whether they have not reaſon to fear, whilſt catching at all advantages that are for this world, they are only afraid of thoſe which will help them to heaven. Have mercy, O God, on all chriſtians, and teach them to be wiſe in this point, that being fearful

of damnation, they may not embrace thoſe who rather lead them to it, nor fly the converſation of ſuch as are willing to remove them from the danger of that unhappy ſtate, and fit them for a better.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Galat. v. 16. Ends verſe 24.

THE works of the fleſh are manifeſt; fornication, uncleanneſs, enmity, diſſentions, jealouſies, animoſities, complaints—of which I declare to you as I have done already, that they who do theſe things, ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God. Had the Apoſtle here given us a liſt only of thoſe groſſer crimes, with which he begins his roll, it would have likely encouraged great numbers of chriſtians to have entertained good hopes of themſelves; but when he adds amongſt the works of the fleſh, *enmities*, *diſſentions*, *animoſities*, &c. and declares theſe to have ſuch a malignity in them, as to exclude from the kingdom of God; this carries terror along with it, and diminiſhes, I fear, very much that number, which otherwiſe might be eſteemed ſafe. For when I conſider, how much theſe kind of evils reign, even amongſt thoſe, whoſe lives ſeem regular and pious; that there are few

families, but what have laſting animoſities within themſelves, and fewer, that have not their diſſentions with their neighbours or relations; that every inconſiderable miſunderſtanding, punctilio, point of intereſt, ſeeming affront, and even overſights and indiſcretions, are generally improved and made the ſeed of diviſion; that there are ſcarce any of theſe breaches made, that are ever truly healed again, but only covered over with the counterfeit of a ſtarched civility, and upon the leaſt touch break out again: When I reflect on the great bitterneſs, and animoſity occaſioned by the diverſity of religions, and that there are very few, but what through zeal or ignorance, have their heart poſſeſſed with paſſion or even malice againſt their neighbour: when I conſider, that within thoſe walls, which ſhut out the world, and are the retirement of thoſe pious ſouls, which ſeek for ſhelter againſt all ſin; that even there, I ſay, animoſities, envies, quarrels, contentions and complaints are kept alive; and that having at once courageouſly renounced thoſe charms which deceive the world, they fall unthinkingly into theſe ſnares: When caſting my thoughts about, I conſider theſe ſpreading evils, I then, wholly ſurprized, cry out; Lord, if they

that do theſe things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God, how very few are they that ſhall be ſaved; ſince they, that are moſt remarkable for piety and a regular life, here in this, are in danger of being made a prey to a deſigning enemy!

Not that I can apprehend all thoſe immediately to forfeit their right to heaven, who find themſelves engaged in petty diſputes and differences with their neighbour, or even are ſurprized with ſudden paſſions and diſlikes at their proceedings; for this may ſometimes be the caſe of the beſt and moſt cautious chriſtians, who have no ſecurity againſt theſe temptations: but then theſe are ever careful to ſtand upon their guard, and uſe all means to prevent theſe evils taking root within their ſouls; they ſtrive to interpret every thing in the moſt favourable ſenſe, ſuppreſs all reſentments, make no complaints, which being conveyed to the other party by indiſcreet and unfriendly hands, ever ſerve to widen the breach; they give ear to no whiſperings, ſuſpect ill reports, paſs by many things, both as to words and writing, which, if laid hold on, might help to exaggerate; are very cautious, how they anſwer letters, chuſing to ſpeak nothing to ſuch particulars, which ſeem the dictates of a miſtake

or paſſion, and it may be, are followed with repentance, as ſoon as calm thoughts return, though without the power of recalling, what they then wiſh had never been written; they engage the intereſt of friends to remove all miſunderſtandings; ſeek often to ſpeak face to face, and being their own advocates, armed with patience and ſincerity, undeceive the other party in many prejudices conceived; and if truth requires it, acknowledge their own paſſion or miſtake; aſk pardon; and even, when blameleſs, ſubmit themſelves, eſpouſing the cauſe of charity, and humbly ſeeking the re-eſtabliſhment of their former peace. Thus good chriſtians, induſtrious in uſing timely means, give not opportunity to theſe firſt ſeeds of difference to grow up to any ſtrength; but by good management, improve the very temptations to theſe ſins, into the exerciſe of moſt heroic virtues; and inſtead of ſhutting, thus prudently make them ſerve to open the gates of heaven, and entail them to that inheritance, which otherwiſe would unhappily be cut off.

And this is the misfortune here pronounced by the Apoſtle againſt thoſe, who take the other way; who not extinguiſhing the firſt ſparks of jealouſies and diſ-

cord, admit and ſhelter them within their breaſt, let them be blown up by others breath, till they grow into a flame, or at leaſt take ſuch hold, as to put all into diſorder. Hence laſting quarrels and contentions are promoted, malicious and biting diſcourſes are carried on, every occaſion is catched as to thwart, provoke, and undervalue each other; and ſo many evils creep in inſenſibly on ſouls that are thus diſturbed, it is no wonder the Apoſtle for theſe diſorders, exclude them heaven. And however at firſt ſight this may appear ſevere, yet if we diligently examine into the riſe and progreſs of theſe ſins, we ſhall diſcover there is ſcarce one fundamental virtue belonging to a chriſtian, but what is injured by them, and that they quite undermine the goſpel. For whoever but with a paſſing eye obſerves, will find the goſpel ſpirit, to be a ſpirit of charity and mutual love, a ſpirit of humility, meekneſs and patience, a ſpirit that teaches us to bear and forbear, to pardon injuries, do good for evil, and only on theſe terms, promiſes the reward of future happineſs. This is the ſpirit, ſpread through the whole goſpel, and there is not any one point ſo often repeated, and earneſtly preſſed in all the epiſtles extant in holy

writ, as this, with the aſſurance of this being the character of a true diſciple, and that whoever is found without it, his religion and all his hopes are certainly in vain.

And are not now the ſins of enmity and diſſentions quite contrary to this? For in the very firſt ſtep of taking any thing amiſs of our neighbour, is there not want of patience? In being diſturbed, is there not a want of humility? In the entertaining theſe diſquiets, is there not a want of meekneſs? In all complaining and biting diſcourſes, is there not a want of charity? In engaging others in our quarrel, is there not a want of peace? In not ſeeking to make up the breach, is it not the effect of ſtubbornneſs and pride? In ſtanding at a diſtance, is it not obſtinacy? In expounding every thing to the worſt ſenſe, is it not ſpite and envy? commending their own proceedings to the diſparagement of others, is it not ſelf-love and revenge; with variety of other evils? And what now is become of the ſpirit of the goſpel? Here is the ſpirit of Satan very plain, but nothing of Jeſus Chriſt. And is it to be wondered then, that theſe ſins are numbered amongſt the works of the fleſh, which have ſuch a complication of evils and corruption in

them? The greater wonder is, that chriſtians ſhould be ſo eaſy in falling into them, and letting every provocation break that bond of peace and love, which cannot be violated, without, in fact, renouncing the goſpel and the ſpirit of Chriſt. And it is much the greater wonder ſtill, that this ſhould be the misfortune of thoſe, who by a ſtricter tie have obliged themſelves to follow Chriſt: here, methinks, all differences, animoſities and diſſentions ſhould be wholly baniſhed; for what can the moſt rigorous auſterities, and conſtant devotions avail, if charity and mutual love attend them not? What religion and chriſtianity can there be, where this indiſpenſable duty is left out? If they believe St. *Paul*, they muſt believe, that without this, all the reſt will profit nothing. Imprint, therefore, O God, this fundamental principle in the hearts of all that undertake to be thy ſervants; let no vain pretexts deceive them, to the loſs of their ſouls; remove diſſentions from amongſt the faithful, preſerve peace and unity; and while they know theſe to be the fruits of the ſpirit, grant they may ever remember, that all diviſions are the works of the fleſh.

Fourteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. vi. 24. Ends verſe 33.

I Say to you, be not ſolicitous. Whoever reads this goſpel, and obſerves with how many arguments this point is preſſed by Chriſt to his followers, muſt neceſſarily conclude, that ſolicitude, in regard of worldly affairs is a great evil to chriſtians; that, as ſuch, it is carefully to be avoided; and that whoever is not careful in this point, deſpiſes not only the advice, but command of Chriſt, and cannot be ſuppoſed much concerned for ſalvation.

The evil of ſolicitude is very evident, in poſſeſſing the heart ſo much with the concerns of this world, as to take it off from the thoughts of a better, and render it incapable of performing, with tolerable peace of mind, any of thoſe duties, which are neceſſary for preventing the misfortune of eternal miſery. This is ſo well

well known by daily experience, that nothing but an indifferency of mind, as to all that is eternal, can take off the ſenſe of this evil; and it is impoſſible to be generally ſubject to it, but a perſon muſt upon this conclude himſelf moſt unhappy, if the want of faith hides not from his eyes the horror of his own ſtate.

There is a great injuſtice in it, in letting temporal concerns ſo much outweigh thoſe, which are eternal, as, for the care of a ſhort life, to neglect all neceſſary proviſion for that which is to be everlaſting. There is a kind of infidelity in it, in not depending with due confidence on the providence and goodneſs of God. There is a very great blindneſs and unreaſonableneſs in it, in ſeeking help ſuch a way, as can afford no help; but is ſo very contrary to whatever is propoſed, that an enemy, could adviſe no other, for the diſappointment of all that is deſired. It being moſt certain, that ſolicitude unfits a man for that, which he is otherwiſe capable of doing; ſo that it may be truly ſaid to be an unnatural expedient, by which we caſt a blind over our own eyes, cut our own ſinews, tie up our hands, and put ourſelves out of the way, and as much act the madmen, as

thoſe, who get upon a block to ride, or take up a hammer to write or paint. And then, as for the bleſſing, which is to be expected from heaven for our ſucceſs, is there not ſo much impatience in ſolicitude, as to make us unworthy of that help we want? And is not the uneaſineſs under his appointments a kind of revolt, ſuch as is more likely to ſhut up the treaſures of his power and goodneſs, than open them to our relief? God has promiſed his help to thoſe that put their truſt in him, and the many inſtances of his ſurpriſing mercies are demonſtration, that nothing is ſo effectual to the obtaining them, as a vigorous faith, and lively hope in the midſt of ſuch circumſtances, where, according to human reaſon, there appear no motives, but of deſpair. Now if this confidence in God, be that, which moſt obliges him to our aſſiſtance; is it not plain, that ſuch chriſtians, as are in want of his help, and by their immoderate ſolicitude, ſhew that they have neither faith in his providence, nor confidence in his goodneſs; is it not plain, I ſay, that they turn God's hand from them, and wholly unfit themſelves for receiving thoſe ſuccours, which an humble ſubmiſſive pa-

tience, and a firm hope might have obtained for them.

What therefore are chriſtians to do, amidſt the many perplexing circumſtances of life, ſuch as afflict for the preſent, or have horror in proſpect of what is to come? It is certain they are bound to uſe all diligence for remedying of preſent evils, and ſheltering themſelves againſt ſuch ſtorms, as ſeem to threaten; becauſe ſuch diligence is a duty; it is the order of Providence, for men to labour according to the exigencies of life; and it is nothing leſs than tempting God, for men ſo to reſt in Providence, as to ſit ſtill without doing any thing, in confidence of ſuch a falſe hope. The firſt duty then is, for chriſtians to be careful and induſtrious in all circumſtances, and eſpecially when preſſed with difficulties: But then this care muſt be rational, that is, ſuch as may be helpful in order to obtaining the relief deſired, and not a hinderance to it: Now it being moſt evident, that all immoderate ſolicitude diſcompoſes the mind, takes off all courage, diſtracts it with needleſs fears, and thus renders it uncapable both of diſcerning and acting; whenever this care ariſes to ſolicitude, it muſt be judged not rational, and therefore

not becoming a chriſtian. But as the care here required is to be according to reaſon, ſo it is likewiſe to be according to faith; that is, muſt be regulated by ſuch principles as faith teaches.

Firſt, Therefore chriſtians are to be induſtrious in the moſt proportioned means; and yet not ſo, as to depend on ſuch applications or means, but on the Divine Power and Goodneſs, which are to give both virtue and bleſſing to them.

Secondly, This care is to be ſuch, that even then, when there appear little or no hopes from human means, chriſtians are ſtill to keep their minds balanced againſt anxiety and deſpair; by placing a firm hope in God, with an aſſurance of his power being ſuch, that he has ſtill infinite ways of ſending relief; and with a confidence of his goodneſs, that he, who has formed both body and ſoul, is charged with the care of preſerving them, till the time he has appointed for their ſeparation.

Thirdly, The care in making defence againſt the evils of life, is to be accompanied with a peaceable ſubmiſſion to the orders of God: So that, whether he be pleaſed to remedy theſe evils, as he did in *Job*; or require the continuance of them, as he did in the chriſtians of the firſt

three hundred years, or to put an end to life by ſuch evils, as at other times by the ſword, the fever, or the plague; as was the caſe of the primitive martyrs, of St. *Lewis* in his wars, and of infinite others dying under the ſeverity of their calamities; chriſtians are to wait with calmneſs, expecting whatever ſhall be appointed, with a full perſuaſion, that whatever it be, it will be beſt for them; ſince it is the execution of his orders, whoſe infinite wiſdom and fatherly goodneſs cannot fail of conſulting their good; who thus like good children, wholly put themſelves into his hands. In this manner are chriſtians, in all circumſtances, to reſt in God: And if this be done with a due dependence of hope, it is the ſureſt means of delivering them from all anxious diſquiets, and of finding peace of mind, when there is no other peace about them.

But with all theſe rules, I am ſenſible, how difficult it is for ſome tempers, to obtain any reprieve from the perplexing evil, which is ever as a rack upon their thoughts, in the almoſt continal diſquiet it cauſes in them. Theſe, however, if they have a ſenſe of their misfortune, muſt not be dejected, but ought daily to ſtrive againſt it, by compoſing their

thoughts with a due ſubjection, to God's will; by exerciſing their minds in reflecting upon the great obligation they have of a juſt faith and hope in God; and frequently conſidering, how much more it is their intereſt, to provide againſt eternal evils, than thoſe that are temporal. From ſuch endeavours, joined with prayer, may be expected ſome abatement of this diſtemper; and if that part which cannot be overcome, be daily lamented as an evil, and the trouble of it be ſuffered with patience, till God ſhall ſend remedy, I hope it will no more be charged upon them, than other inclinations and paſſions; which being involuntary, cannot carry with them the guilt of wilful ſin.

But as for chriſtians in general, it is their common concern to prevent in them the growth of this unhappy temper. And a general means muſt be, by daily labouring to work their minds into as much indifferency as they can, as to all things of this world; becauſe this is the way to gain liberty for their ſouls, and prevent that narrowneſs of ſpirit, which is a general cauſe of ſolicitude. Another general means, muſt be by a prudent education; for ſince the great number of our neceſſities are the occaſion of our

ſolicitude, and theſe are not ſo much from nature, as from cuſtom; it is very evident that where, by a hardy education, the ordinary wants are brought into a narrow compaſs, there the mind is more eaſily contented, and freed from the temptations and weakneſſes of a nicer education; whence it muſt be concluded, that as our deſires are enlarged and our wants multiplied, either by our own or parents indiſcreet indulgence; ſo far is laid in us the ſeed of future ſolicitude, with all the unhappineſs it cauſes, both to this world, and the next. Another help may be, in not being too earneſt in things that are either indifferent in themſelves, or but inconſiderable; becauſe it is impoſſible, that any ſhould be long free from diſquiets, who can be pleaſed with nothing but what is done their own way; whence I cannot but diſapprove of their method, who being fenced againſt neceſſity, are ſo bent upon impertinences, and have their ſatisfaction depending on ſo many niceties, that they are under as general an uneaſineſs, as thoſe who have their bread to ſeek. Here is a ſolicitude that is certainly their own fault; and I queſtion not, but they will be charged with the guilt of all thoſe hinderances, which it brings upon them. There are

many ways, O God, by which chriſtians are brought into the temptation of tranſgreſſing thy command; and their help can only be from thee: Give them therefore, I beſeech thee, a true ſenſe of the life that is to come, that no worldly concern may take place of it in their hearts, but that ſeeking that in the firſt place, they may be under thy care as to all things elſe, and depending on thee, as their father, may not loſe heaven by that ſolicitude, which only diſturbs, but can help them nothing as to this world.

Fifteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Galatians v. 25. Ends vi. 10.

IF we live by the ſpirit, let us alſo walk by the ſpirit.. Walking by the ſpirit is a neceſſary conſequence of living by the ſpirit; for the ſpirit is not as a barren ſeed, that can lie concealed, without appearing in our actions, and the conduct of our lives. No, there is none lives by the life of the ſpirit who leads not a ſpiritual life: For a ſpiritual life and the ſpirit of God are inſeparable. *Opus ſuum probet unuſquiſque:* Let therefore every chriſtian prove and examine what his works are: If, upon enquiry, there appears nothing but what is carnal and worldly in their actions; if the ſoul be not carried towards God, by holy deſires, by prayer, and the wings of love, it is plain their is nothing but ſelf-love and paſſion govern in their hearts; and they in vain flatter themſelves with the thoughts of being under the conduct of the Holy

Spirit, if their be not a certain bent in them, which effectually applies them to the works of juſtice. They are not therefore only the profligate and wicked chriſtians, who live in defiance of God and his commandments, that are here to take the alarm; but all others, with a jealous eye, are to apprehend themſelves concerned, who do not find, that they are governed by the ſpirit; becauſe whatever is not of the ſpirit, is not of God; and whatever is not of God cannot have God for a recompence; becauſe he being infinitely juſt, cannot be the reward of what is not good; and how can any thing poſſibly be good, which is not from him?

This is the only teſt of whatever is truly chriſtian and holy; and whatever will not abide this, muſt be caſt by as corrupt and adulterate: So that however the lives of many may in appearance paſs for chriſtian, yet they are not really ſo, if they have not God for their principal and general mover. What then are thoſe, who have their hearts full of the world, who, being free from thoſe common vices which defile the great part of mankind, have yet their ſouls wholly taken up and buſied with things of this world? On theſe is the whole run of their thoughts, theſe are the principal ob-

ject of their affections and deſires; from the ſucceſs of theſe is the only reſt and ſatisfaction they know; and a diſappointment or miſcarriage here, is what deſtroys all inward peace, and all in this ſeems loſt to them. Now can it be imagined that theſe earthly ſouls walk by the Spirit of God, who have the world alone for their direction in all they do? Is it in God theſe live, is it him they ſeek, is it him they love, is he their happineſs, or is the poſſeſſion of him the end of all their labours? It is this indeed God ought to be to chriſtians: But theſe make the world a God to them; it is this, and not God, they love with all their hearts, with all their ſouls, and with all their ſtrength. And theſe are not only the unhappy circumſtances of thoſe wretched miſers, whoſe happineſs and ſouls are locked up in their treaſures; but, what is moſt wonderful, even of too many of a narrower fortune, who move with as great ſolicitude within the ſcanty ſphere of a room or two, as if the whole world were within their doors. They are not content to attend to every concern with care; but anxiety and a perpetual hurry accompany them in all they do; and there is not a thing they go about, though never ſo inconſiderable, but in the worſe ſenſe, it is

true of them; *Anima mea in manibus meis ſemper:* Their whole ſoul is always in their hands: Thus are they truly worldly ſouls; and though, like moles, their whole buſineſs is to turn up but one poor handful of earth; yet they are as earthly ſtill as if they had mountains to remove. Hence they have no delight to converſe with God in prayer: They can find no leiſure to attend to the work of their ſalvation: and if at any time the importunity of ſpiritual friends, or ſeeming decency oblige them to it; with what diſtraction is this performed! How little is their care and diligence in this, if compared with that great concern with which they act in all other affairs! Here is but a paſſing and unſettled thought, and there is their ſoul. For where their treaſure is, there is their heart; a poor treaſure God knows, to exchange for heaven. And can theſe imagine, this is *walking by the ſpirit?* Truly there appears to me nothing but corruption and the world; and though it be but a little part of it they adore; yet in this what are they better than thoſe, whoſe paſſions are more unlimited and graſp at all? The ſoul is equally loſt, whatever it be fixed on, if it be not fixed on God. Whether the idol be great or little; whether it be an ox or an

ant, whether it be of gold or ſtraw, the idolatry is ſtill the ſame. And if only thoſe are born of God, who overcome the world; how can theſe pretend to it, whoſe ſouls are thus truly ſlaves to it?

And now, if we go on by this principle, and meaſure ſtill other chriſtians whoſe hearts are wholly diſengaged from theſe kind of cares; but then whoſe cares are equal in ſtudying how to pleaſe themſelves: Who think not how the world goes, but only how to make the world a happineſs to them, in ſports and entertainments, in vain ſhews and dreſſes, and in a life of idleneſs and eaſe, &c. If we meaſure, I ſay, all theſe by this principle of *walking by the ſpirit*; have we not reaſon to apprehend, the ſpirit, they walk by, is not of God, but rather the evil ſpirit of ſelf-love and the world; ſince it is not God, they ſeek to pleaſe; but their general care how to pleaſe and gratify themſelves; and what is there of God in this, whilſt to themſelves they every one become their own idol, and to this make a general ſacrifice of all they have or are, of body and ſoul, of all they think and do? For though it may be, there is nothing they are concerned in, but what in its kind and due degree be lawful; yet all this ceaſes to be ſo, when

once it riſes to an exceſs, and with an immoderate affection carries away their hearts from God and fixes them on creatures. What is more innocent than a game at cheſs or tables? and yet hear what St. *Francis Sales*, who is ever moderate, nor troubles his reader with unneceſſary ſcruples, ſays on this ſubject: *Above all*, Philothea, *take heed thou ſet not thy affection on this; for how lawful ſoever any recreation be, it is a vice to ſet the heart and affection on it, to long after it, or to trouble and vex thyſelf with it*, p. 3. c. 31. To ſet the heart on what is innocent, he ſays is a *vice;* and does not he in this condemn all their lives as vicious, or defective at leaſt, who live in theſe exceſſes? Truly whoever compares them with the goſpel, muſt neceſſarily conclude it ſo. For a chriſtian there deſcribed, is one that follows the life of Chriſt, a man of ſelf-denial and mortification, dead to the world, to its pleaſures and vanities, crucified with Jeſus, whoſe converſation is in heaven, who eſteems nothing but the love of Jeſus, who ſeeks to pleaſe God, to this directs his thoughts, his deſires, his actions, and makes this the end of all his labours. This is the ſpirit of the goſpel and of God; and *they who are led by the*

Spirit of God, are the children of God, Rom. 8. 14. And whoſe children then muſt they be, who are not directed by this Spirit? *He who is not with me*, ſays Chriſt, *is againſt me*; and in this declares, they are not his. Hence we may conclude, there are none that walk by the ſpirit as they ought, but ſuch as make towards heaven in all they do, in their ſtudies, in their buſineſs, in their diverſions, in their expences, in their eating, cloathing and ſleeping, *&c.* For their deſign in all theſe, being to make uſe of and proceed in each particular, as far as God has appointed it for them; all they then do, is a compliance with his divine will, and an effect of that obedience and love they owe him: But when chriſtians proceed by an undue method, whether in buſineſs or diverſions; ſo as to ſet their hearts upon them or any creatures with an immoderate affection, with the daily improvement of ſelf-love and the love of the world, and a forſaking of the ſpirit of the goſpel, then all this is ſo far walking by the fleſh, and cannot be pleaſing to him, ſince whatever is of ſelf-love and the world cannot be of God, but of corruption; and they who ſow in the fleſh, ſhall of the fleſh reap corruption, as the Apoſtle here ſays, and what is that

but ſo many ſteps towards death? And what can poſſibly ſecure us againſt this evil into which we ſo naturally and unthinkingly run, but thy grace, O God? Direct us therefore, we beſeech thee, in all we do, that we may ſeek thee in all things; that neither the love of ourſelves or the world may gain upon us, but that as we pretend to live by the ſpirit, ſo we may ever walk by the ſpirit, and ſo obtain the effect of this promiſe, that they who ſow in the ſpirit, ſhall of the ſpirit reap life everlaſting.

Fifteenth Sunday after Penetcoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke vii. 11. Ends verſe 16.

OUR *Lord, moved with compaſſion, ſaid to her, weep not;* that is to the widow, who was accompanying her only ſon to the grave. Chriſt having compaſſion on this afflicted mother, teaches his followers, not to deſpiſe their neighbour in affliction, or paſs him without any regard to his miſery; for that muſt proceed from want of light and of charity; but to expreſs a ſenſe of his misfortune, and contribute, in the beſt manner they are able, to the drying up his tears. All the evils of this life are the conſequence of man's ſin, the marks of our condemnation, and the execution of that ſentence, which excluded us from our firſt happineſs: As often then, as we ſee our neighbour under affliction, is there not ſufficient reaſon to open our hearts to grief, if not for his ſake, at leaſt for our own; ſince all afflic-

tion ought to revive in us the memory of our loſt happineſs, and make us apprehenſive of the uncertain iſſue of ſin, which we ſee is puniſhed with ſuch ſeverity, even in this life? For is it not obvious, that all evils here, are part of that cup of gall and bitterneſs, which the juſtice of God has prepared for all ſinners of the earth, and of which the reprobate ſhall drink for eternity who have made no advantage of thoſe misfortunes, which were ſent for their trial here? Are they not all arguments of God's wrath againſt ſin? In the afflictions then of others, we ſee what we are, what we deſerve, and what it is that threatens us; we ſee the uncertainty and vanity of human hopes, which fail the poſſeſſors; and after many enjoyments, and the promiſes of a ſeeming ſecurity, leave them at length, by the experience of miſery, to be convinced of their credulity and folly. In fine, ſo many leſſons there are in the the ſight of human miſery, that either for our own ſakes, or thoſe that ſuffer, the ſoul muſt neceſſarily be touched with ſome feeling of it, and there is nothing but inſenſibility, that can ſhut out compaſſion.

But however, while thus we are directed to have a charitable tenderneſs for

all that ſuffer, and to join with Chriſt in our endeavours for removing the occaſion of their tears; yet I believe, among the many misfortunes, which generally cauſe wet eyes, very few of them are real evils; and the grief which follows them, is only the effect of our blindneſs and weakneſs, but ſo far from being juſtly due, that to the greateſt part of thoſe that mourn, we may, without enquiry, and with little danger of miſtake, poſitively thus ſay to them, *Noli flere: Weep not.*

This we may poſitively ſay, in regard of all temporal evils, if we conſider them as the appointment or permiſſion of God; for in this conſideration, though nature be uneaſy under them, yet from every believer there is a ſubmiſſion due to the orders of God; ſo that it is no leſs than a kind of rebellion, to let that be the ſubject of an indulged or affected grief, which is not the effect of chance, but according to the ordinance of God: Here then it is, the chriſtian ought to be afraid, by his mourning and tears, to call in queſtion what has been decreed in heaven; and is bound, by doing violence to nature, to confeſs, that all is juſt and good what God has done; and with *David*, to give a check to all the com-

plaints both of words and tears, becauſe the finger of God is in all: *Obmutui & non aperui os meum, quoniam tu feciſti: I was ſilent, and opened not my mouth, becauſe it is thou, Lord, who haſt done it.* Weep not therefore, chriſtian; *Noli flere*: Becauſe, whatever be the occaſion of thy grief, it is thy God has thought fit it ſhould be ſo; it is thy Lord who has done it; and it is no other than Chriſt, who ſays to thee, *Noli flere: Weep not.*

If we conſider theſe evils again, according to the order of Providence in thoſe ends, which God propoſes in them; we ſhall find that though the immediate effects are diſagreeable to nature, yet they have more of real bleſſing than misfortune in them. For how often is it, that what we reſent as our greateſt loſſes, as the loſs of children, friends, fortune, preferment, health, reputation, are, through our unhappineſs, rendered abſolutely neceſſary, either for the diſengaging us from thoſe ſins, in which we are already involved; or for preventing ſuch ſins, we ſhould otherwiſe fall into, were not the occaſions thus ſeaſonably taken out of our hands? we ſee here, before Chriſt raiſed the young man, he touched the bier; upon which thoſe, who carrying him to the

grave, ſtood ſtill. Sinful paſſions are the bearers, which carry ſinners to the grave; as long as theſe go on, there can be no hopes of their ariſing. Is it not then a mercy, that God ſo diſpoſes ſecond cauſes, as to put a ſtop to them: That he makes uſe of diſappointments, adverſities, ſickneſs, *&c.* to break off the courſe of our paſſions, and thus to put us in a diſpoſition of reflecting upon our unhappy ſtate, and of opening our hearts to him who commands us to riſe? This is certainly the mercy deſigned us, in many of thoſe accidents we ſo much reſent, and make the ground of our complaint. And while God is thus good in the afflictions he ſends, muſt it not be moſt adviſable for chriſtians, under all manner of all trials, peaceably to reſt in the orders of God; and to hope, that what is thus bitter to the taſte, is only by way of medicine, and that the effect of it will be the health of the ſoul; and therefore, that it cannot be warranted in ſuch caſe to yield under the weight of grief, leſt, in pretending to lament a misfortune, they preſumptuouſly and ungratefully turn themſelves againſt a bleſſing? As to all temporal evils therefore, *Noli flere: Weep not:* And if nature be inclined to grief, ſet faith againſt

nature, and by its healing principles, endeavour, as ſoon as may be, to dry up its tears; for it may be a mercy, what thou calleſt thy miſery; therefore, *Weep not.*

There is only one evil, we may ſecurely lament without danger of a miſtake, and that is the evil of ſin. In this afflicted mother bewailing the death of her ſon, is figured to us the church in grief for the loſs of ſo many of her children, which ſhe has brought forth by baptiſm; and we are ſo far from being diſcouraged, that we are called upon to join with her in theſe tears. At the laſt day, when her ſpouſe ſhall meet her he will then ſay to her, *Noli flere: Weep no more:* Becauſe there will be no more reaſon then to weep, after the ſanctification of all the elect. But now, whilſt ſhe is in her widowhood, and in the abſence of her ſpouſe, it is her principal exerciſe to follow ſinners, and lament their death, until they either find Jeſus, or being laid in their grave, are paſt all hopes of finding him. It is by her tears Chriſt is moved to have compaſſion on ſinners; and her tears being nothing but the penance done by thoſe who are in her boſom, and in the ſpirit of her ſpouſe; hence it is, that all her mem-

bers are bound to join their prayers, penance and tears, ſo to move Chriſt to have mercy on ſinners; and granting them the ſpirit of a true converſion, reſtore them to a new life.

As therefore in that train, which Chriſt meet on the way, there were only two ſorts of people; the dead party, whoſe funeral it was, and the perſons who accompanied the afflicted mother: So it is in the church; there are in it but two ſorts of people; thoſe whoſe death is lamented, and thoſe who lament: All are on one ſide or the other; ſuch as mourn not make up part of that number, who being dead, are the juſt occaſion of others mourning. It is by this we make ſome judgment of our ſtate: If we are ſenſibly touched with the ſpiritual death of our brethren, and of the infinite number, who fall by the devil's power or ſnares; if we do what we are able, for preſerving the life of any, if we take part with the church, in her mourning and praying, we may have ſome confidence of being living members of the church, who comfort her, and not of the number of the dead, who are the ſubject of her grief. But if we have none of this concern in us, if it be a point we do not think of, and are not touched

with the loſs of ſo many ſouls which periſh daily, there is reaſon enough to fear we make one of that number.

I wiſh therefore all chriſtians would ſeriouſly reflect on this point; of the almoſt univerſal corruption of the unbelieving world; how far vice and error ſpread; how general a forgetfulneſs there is of God: O what numbers of ſouls periſh daily! For ſuch a conſideration, I think, is enough to oblige them to join daily with the church in her mourning, and to renounce a great part of that life, made up of idleneſs and divertiſements, which, to ſuch as have their eyes open, can be no more becoming and agreeable, than for children to be found amidſt their idle entertainments, on the day when their father or mother is carried forth to the grave. And ſince they have an aſſurance, that by the exerciſes of devotion, charity, and penance, they may prevail on the divine mercy, and recover ſinners from the bonds of death, can it be leſs than cruelty, to neglect theſe duties, and live away their days in idleneſs and unprofitable divertiſements? Grant, O God, to all chriſtians, a ſenſe of this general miſery, that they may not, like unbelievers, there mourn, where thankſgiving may be due;

but

but lament only the evil of ſin, both in themſelves and others, that ſo they may obtain pardon of all their offences, and by this charity, help to regain thoſe to life, who are dead to God, and in the way to death everlaſting.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Eph. iii. 13. To the End.

I *Bend my knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt,* —— *that according to the riches of his glory, he may grant you to be ſtrengthened by his Holy Spirit in the inward man.* This was the charity of St *Paul* to his flock, who being truly ſenſible of the many difficulties and dangers in a Chriſtian life, and how large a portion of grace was abſolutely neceſſary for their conduct and ſecurity, therefore made it the ſubject of his prayers, that they might be ſtrengthened by God's Holy Spirit in the inward man. This is a ſufficient motive to quicken a like ſpirit of charity in all paſtors, in regard of the flock committed to them; not to be indifferent and unconcerned at the ſtate of their ſouls; but with a fatherly care to obſerve all their ſpiritual wants, with laborious endeavours to ſeek to redreſs all their evils, and with fervent and daily prayers,

to bend their knees before the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that he would vouchſafe them his divine aſſiſtance, for their protection againſt all dangers, and bring them to a happy end of this troubleſome pilgrimage. A paſtor, that thus knows how to be ſolicitous for his flock, who has them in his heart, who eſteems them, with St *Paul*, his joy and his crown, certainly inherits the ſpirit of this great apoſtle; but to be cold and negligent in their concerns, is the ſpirit of an hireling, of one that ſeems more ſolicitous how to live by them, than how to make them live. Perfect, O God, this zeal of St *Paul* in all that undertake his charge, and make them truly ſenſible, that it is in their hands, by their watchings and labours, to make their people the ſubject of their joy and triumph; or by their negligence, the ſubject of their deſpair and damnation at the laſt day.

But this prayer of the apoſtle is not a leſſon only to paſtors, but alſo to the flock, to excite in them a like zeal and diligence for their obtaining of God that grace whereby they may be daily ſtrengthened in the inward man. For certainly, if they ſeriouſly conſider the almoſt infinite difficulties and dangers that are before them; and on the other ſide, how altogether un-

able they are of themſelves to overcome them, they will ſoon diſcover an abſolute neceſſity of joining with their paſtor, and making their conſtant application to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, for the obtaining his help, without which they muſt unavoidably fall a prey to the enemy of their ſalvation, and be loſt for ever.

Let but any one reflect on the corruption of our nature, and its ſtrong inclinations to evil; on the variety of temptations, to which we are ever expoſed; that one no ſooner goes, but another comes; that while we avoid one extreme, we generally run into the other; how naturally we abuſe all the bleſſings and gifts of God: What difficulties there are in conquering any ill cuſtom, in mortifying our paſſions, our proper judgment, our will, our imagination, our ſenſes; in preventing the effects of ſelf-love, private intereſt, and pride in the beſt of our actions: What difficulties there are in diſcharging the obligations belonging to all ſtates, not only of paſtors and magiſtrates, but of parents, maſters, ſtewards, truſtees, lawyers, traders, children, ſervants: What difficulties in breaking through the vices of the mode, and the world, which have practice, authority, and numbers to recommend them, and yet are

ſuch, in many particulars, as are at defiance with the whole Spirit of Chriſt and his Goſpel: What difficulties in the true uſe of plenty, riches, and peace: What difficulties in ſickneſs, troubles, poverty, in darkneſs and dryneſs of ſpirit: What difficulties in the great diſproportion of our reaſon with all the myſteries of God; in governing our wild, roving, and ſenſual fancies; in all the acts of true repentance, devotion, and virtue; in not being deceived with the falſe comforts of a counterfeit mercy, a counterfeit humility, a counterfeit patience and devotion, by their not being grounded and rooted in charity, which is the life of all virtue: What difficulties, in fine, in dying happily, and being preſented before the judgment-ſeat, to render an account of our ſtewardſhip, and of all our idle thoughts, words, and actions. Theſe, and infinite others, are the difficulties belonging to a Chriſtian ſtate, ever accompanied with ſo many dangers from the hidden ſnares of our ſpiritual enemy, from the indiſcretion, provocation, malice, and ill example of neighbours, from the corruption of our nature, and inſincerity of our hearts, that we may ſay truly, we are encompaſſed with evils on every ſide; and walk in the midſt of enemies from the firſt glimpſe of reaſon,

till the laſt moment, when death ſhuts our eyes. And then, if we look into ourſelves, and ſee what grounds of ſecurity from within ourſelves againſt all theſe dangers, we can diſcover nothing but what is ſufficient to terrify and even caſt us into deſpair. We can ſee nothing but miſery and weakneſs, poverty and blindneſs; ſo far from being able to do any thing for our ſecurity, that of ourſelves we are not able ſo much as to frame one good thought.

And is not this conſideration of our great danger on the one ſide, and our extreme weakneſs on the other, ſufficient motive to make our moſt earneſt addreſſes to Almighty God, that he would pleaſe to watch over us, to ſtrengthen us interiorly by his holy grace, and conduct us ſafe through all difficulties and dangers? We are nothing of ourſelves; and if he helps us not, we ſhall ever remain in our weakneſs, and moſt certainly be overcome by our enemies; and the conſequence of this, is not only a ſlavery to ſin here, but an everlaſting ſlavery hereafter, from whence there can be no redemption. One would think this abſolute dependence we have on God, ſhould make us conſtant at our prayers; and the hopes of ſecuring us againſt eternal evils, ſhould oblige us to be atten-

tive to them. But ſee here a demonſtration of our prodigious inſenſibility; 'tis not all this is ſufficient to prevail on us in this point; but as to the generality, I fear, of Chriſtians, I may ſay, their devotions are performed with ſo great a diſtraction and coldneſs, that one would not imagine the ſubject of them to be a concern of eternity, or that the ſucceſs of it had any dependence on God. It is moſt prodigious, that having a faith of everlaſting life, this ſhould make ſuch weak impreſſions in us, as not only to let us be ſo heartily buſied with this world, but likewiſe be ſo unconcerned at our very prayers, as to permit every triſle to take place of eternity, and every impertinent thought to turn God out of our hearts. What can we ſay of this, but only admire this our miſery, and truly humble ourſelves at the ſight of our weakneſs; and uſe our beſt endeavours, that, amongſt all our other infirmities, this ſtrange ſtupidity at our devotions, may make at preſent ſuch a lively impreſſion on us, as to become a remedy of that evil which we lament, and leave in us ſuch a laſting ſenſe of our miſery, as to put us, not only this day, but our whole lives, upon joining with the apoſtle, in bending our knees to the Father of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, that according to the riches of his

glory, he may grant us to be ſtrengthened by his Holy Spirit in the inward man? For it is thus only we can eſcape all the dangers before us, and ſecure to us the poſſeſſion of life everlaſting.

Sixteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Luke xiv. 1. Ends verſe 11.

IT *came to paſs, when Jeſus entered into the houſe of a certain chief of the Phariſees to eat bread.* We cannot do better on this day, than enter with Jeſus into this houſe, and ſee what we can learn from him.

The firſt leſſon is to paſtors, who, being obliged to have ſome commerce with the world, ought not to let this be, to amuſe themſelves, or paſs away their time, which they are at a loſs how to employ; for this they do not learn from Jeſus Chriſt; but for ſome advantage of themſelves or others, as Chriſt here did, for healing the ſick man, and inſtructing the Phariſees in the true principles of humility. Such commerce is authoriſed by Chriſt, but not that which is unprofitable, which cannot fail of giving authority to whatever is done in their preſence, and is a reproach to their character, in betraying a want of worldly amuſements, to

help away their time, or to keep up their ſpirits.

The ſecond is general to all Chriſtians, to put them in mind, that it is not only lawful to heal on the Sabbath, but that as Chriſt then reſtored health to the ſick man that was before him, ſo they ought ever to look on it as a day appointed by God, in mercy to them, wherein they are commanded to conſider of all the infirmities of their ſouls, and have recourſe to ſuch means as he has ordained for their cure. If he has forbidden all ſervile and unneceſſary labour, it is not becauſe this is in itſelf unlawful, but that ſuch labours may be no hinderance to better duties: And hence it muſt be adviſable for all to conſider the end of this prohibition, and to cut off a great part of thoſe labours, which cuſtom, gluttony, vanity, niceneſs, or vice, ſeem to have made neceſſary; ſo that ſervants, who are under the diſſipation of continual labour all the week, may, on this day, have leiſure to provide for eternity, and not charge their neglect of ſalvation on thoſe, who, knowing not how to diſpenſe with cuſtom, would not allow them time to think of it. And if they here obſerve the reaſon why labour is forbidden, may not they hence frame a true judgment of all other methods, that are a hinderance

to the duties of the day, as of giving the greateſt part of it to ſleeping, ſloth, converſation, entertainments, viſits, &c. A day thus ſpent, is far from being kept holy; and therefore, not anſwering the purpoſes of its inſtitution, cannot be approved in thoſe, who are then called, both by command and example, to ſeek the health of their ſouls, and make proviſion for eternity.

The third leſſon is, the charitable condeſcendence of Chriſt; who not letting the ill diſpoſition of the *Jews* hinder him from healing the ſick man on the Sabbath; yet, at the ſame time, was ſolicitous to remove the ſcandal this cure had cauſed in them; and for this end, lays before them the moſt plauſible reaſons, and ſuch as were moſt proportioned to their miſtaken judgments. From which fact it may be obſerved, that how unjuſt ſoever the ſcandal may be, yet we ought always to remedy it if we can. And ſuch endeavours cannot fail, either of the effect deſired, or of diminiſhing ſomething at leaſt of the averſion raiſed; ſince this being an argument of regard being had to their judgments, it muſt neceſſarily render them more favourable. The not valuing unjuſt ſcandals, is, on the contrary, often the effect of a ſecret contempt, or want of charity, or of ſloth at leaſt, which will not

take the pains to ſatisfy ſuch people upon what motives they have acted: Whilſt true charity and humility oblige us to more condeſcendence; ſince the more people are unjuſt, the greater is their indiſpoſition; and in proportion to their diſtemper, ſo are they more worthy of compaſſion.

A fourth, is to obſerve in the Phariſees, how much the judgment is corrupted by paſſion: We ſee in them, that ſometimes the paſſions are favourable to reaſon, and ſometimes ſtand againſt it; whence it happens, that the ſame reaſon approving what is conformable to its principles, when the thing happens to be ſuitable to paſſion too; is rejected, as being of no force, when it is not at the ſame time favourable to paſſion, and wants this ſupport, or is contrary to ſome other paſſion which is more violent. The Phariſees were very covetous, and this paſſion made them unwilling to loſe any thing belonging to them, as their ox, or aſs, or any thing elſe, though but inconſiderable: Hence their love of intereſt influencing their reaſon, made them judge aright, when this matter was before them, and they were ready enough in concluding, that it was no violation of the Sabbath, to take their ox or aſs out of a ditch on that day, and do what ſhould be neceſſary to preſerve them.

But their love of their neighbour being not very great, and their exceſſive vanity puſhing them on to render themſelves remarkable for their exact obſervation of the law, this vanity made them conclude it a breach of the Sabbath, to relieve and cure a ſick man on that day. Their intereſt was here greater than the opinion they had of the ſtrictneſs of the Sabbath law; but the love of their neighbour being leſs than the deſire they had of ſignalizing themſelves in the rigorous keeping of the law; hence they judged it reaſonable to conſult the ſafety of what was their own, but made it the ſubject of their vanity, to paſs by their neighbour in miſery, and neglect his intereſt, under the pretext of piety. So that they were unjuſt both in the one and the other; becauſe, even when they reaſoned aright, it was not by the force of reaſon, but only of their paſſion, and the love of their own intereſt.

Whence we have two inſtructions; one from the argument taken up by Chriſt againſt the Phariſees; that for doing good to others, it is wiſdom to ſtudy in them thoſe particulars where their paſſions give them a taſte of reaſon; ſo to make them ſenſible of their injuſtice, or affected miſtake in other points, where their paſſions make

them inſenſible of the force it carries with it. The other from the example of the Phariſees; *to wit*, That there is nothing which piety, over-ruled by paſſion, is not capable of abuſing. This made them deſpiſe their neighbour in his affliction; perſuade their followers to abandon their parents in diſtreſs, under the pretext of honouring God with the money that ſhould have been their relief; and to ſcruple at trifles, whilſt they made bold with the eſſential precepts of the law; as in putting Chriſt to death by their falſe accuſations, and making a conſcience of laying the ſilver, which *Judas* brought, in the treaſury of the temple. And if thus the devil leaves in men the appearance of conſcience and piety, whilſt by evident crimes he takes away the ſubſtance, is there not reaſon for all to be upon the watch, ſo to prevent their deceiving themſelves with the ſhadow of virtue, and being deceived by the counterfeit piety of others.

The laſt leſſon is the inſtruction given by Chriſt to the Phariſees, for avoiding pride; where, by putting them in mind of the affront to which a perſon expoſes himſelf, who, chuſing the firſt place, is in danger of being removed with ſhame, and obliged to ſurrender it to others, he helps their

reaſon, even by pride itſelf, for the condemning of pride. By this hint here given us, we may learn to advance the cauſe of humility in many other occaſions, by employing pride againſt pride. For ſince it is obvious, that whatever perſons are obſerved to do, for diſtinguiſhing themſelves from others, is enough to make them ridiculous and odious, and moſt certainly renders them contemptible; and that there is a neceſſity of counterfeiting humility and modeſty, for coming to the end of vanity, which is gaining the eſteem of men; is not this argument enough to convince all of the deformity of pride, ſince it is of that nature, that even men cannot bear it, if it be not diſguiſed? And what then muſt it be in regard of God, who being juſtice and truth itſelf, ſees its whole deformity, and not only when it is barefaced, but even under its moſt ſubtle diſguiſes? And whilſt reaſon, thus helped by pride, is obliged to condemn it, ought it not to go on farther, and not only condemn it, as it is ridiculous to man, but under all its covers, and in its whole extent, becauſe of the eſſential injuſtice in it, which renders it deteſtable to God? Thus Chriſtians ought to do, and conſequently own this truth: That he who exalts himſelf, ſhall be humbled; that is, be as nothing in the

fight of God. This, O Jesus, we are bound to acknowledge, as likewise the mercy of all other truths thou hast here taught us; grant only that we may daily improve from thy instruction, and may not be carried away by the violence of our own passions, or mistaken reason, while we have thy truths to enlighten us; and make us watchful against all delusions.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſians iv. 1. Ends verſe 6.

I *Who am in chains for our Lord, beſeech you to walk worthy of the vocation to which ye are called.* This is the requeſt of St. *Paul* in priſon, and it is of ſo great an extent as to comprehend all Chriſtian duties. For to deſire us to walk worthy of our vocation, is to deſire Chriſtians to walk, in every reſpect, as becomes Chriſtians; and not to forget the obligations of the ſtate to which they are called; juſt as if one ſhould recommend to perſons of honour, in all things, to remember their degree, and never do any thing that is unbecoming their quality. This is an excellent general rule for Chriſtians ever to carry with them, whereby to meaſure all their proceedings, and direct them what to follow and what to avoid; and certainly, were it obſerved, though it might leave way for indiſcretions, yet it would cut off thoſe numberleſs ſins which ruin their ſouls, and caſt ſo great an infamy on their profeſſion.

But the apoſtle is not content with generals; he deſcends to particulars, and ſhews how a Chriſtian ought to walk worthy of his vocation, viz. *With all humility and meekneſs; with patience; bearing with one another in charity; being ſolicitous to preſerve the unity of ſpirit in the bond of peace.* Theſe are the qualifications he ſets down becoming the Chriſtian ſtate, in which none can diſpenſe with themſelves, and yet walk worthy of their profeſſion. For a Chriſtian is one that undertakes to be a follower of Chriſt, and to live according to the ſpirit of the Goſpel; now the Goſpel being the rule, and Chriſt the example of all humility and meekneſs, of patience, charity, and peace, whoever copies theſe not out in his ſoul, and does not practiſe them in his life, cannot poſſibly be reckoned a follower of Chriſt and his Goſpel: For if inſtead of humility, he follows the ſuggeſtions of pride; if inſtead of meekneſs, there be harſhneſs and obſtinacy; if inſtead of patience, there be paſſion and repining; if inſtead of bearing and forgiving, there be retaliating and revenge; if inſtead of peace, there be diſſenſions and quarrels; is it not plain in all this there is a forſaking the Goſpel, and departing from Chriſt? Is it not walking in ways quite contrary to his, and practiſing what he con-

demns as unworthy of a Chriſtian? How then can ſuch an one ſit down at peace under a Chriſtian name, while in his life and practice he quite abandons, or rather makes war with him whom he pretends to follow? For what has pride, obſtinacy, paſſion, revenge, and uncharitable contentions, to do with Chriſt? Are not all theſe the effects of the *old man*, which he commands his followers to put off? And what have his diſciples to do with them, who are all commanded to be like their Maſter? And ſuch as are not, walk unworthy of their vocation.

Theſe virtues then here recommended by St. *Paul* are the indiſpenſible duties of every Chriſtian; but that of preſerving peace and unity is what he moſt earneſtly preſſes, and with the ſtrongeſt arguments: Becauſe we are all but *one body*; there is but *one ſpirit*, and *one hope*, to which we are all called; there is but *one Lord*, *one faith*, *one baptiſm*, *one God and Father of all*, *who is over all*, whoſe providence extends to all, and who reſides in all. Are not here powerful motives to preſerve a perpetual peace and union amongſt all that belong to Chriſt? Firſt, The unity of his myſtical body, of which we are members. Secondly, The unity of the Holy Spirit, who cements all together in one body. Thirdly, The unity of the Divine

Being, in which we ought all to be conſummated for all eternity. Fourthly, The unity of the Maſter and Head, to whom we all belong, and of the ſacrifice by which he hath redeemed us. Fifthly, The unity of the faith and Goſpel, which we profeſs. Sixthly, The unity of the ſacrament, by which we are all regenerate, and receive our ſpiritual being. Seventhly, The unity of our Creator, who has taken us out of the ſame nothing. Eighthly, The unity of a heavenly Father, who governs us by the ſame authority, fills us with his preſence, and unites us to him by his love. Thus Almighty God having reduced all his works to unity, and above all, that principal one of his church; whoever contributes to any diviſion, directly oppoſes the deſigns of God, and the miſſion of Jeſus Chriſt. God will have peace amongſt us; therefore there can be no doing the will of God, where there is not a preſerving of peace. And though there may be ſometimes preſſing motives ſuggeſted for the making contentions reaſonable, yet inaſmuch as theſe can have no proportion to that general good of *unity*, all theſe betray an unreaſonableneſs in them, whilſt aiming at ſome particular good, they undermine the general; and therefore, however cloathed with the pretext of charity and

juſtice, muſt be ever ſuſpected, if not condemned, as the effect of paſſion, ſelf-love, and private intereſt: And are certainly of that dangerous and deceitful nature, that even learning, ſincerity, and ordinary virtue are not proof againſt them.

For if once the heart gives admittance to them, it is ſtrange what diſturbance they give to the ſoul, by corrupting the judgment, clouding the reaſon, biaſſing the affections; ſo that a perſon otherwiſe virtuous and moſt impartial, when engaged in any ſort of contention, ought to ſuſpect all his own deciſions; it being almoſt impoſſible for him, in that diſorder, to carry his thoughts even, ſo as not to favour the part he eſpouſes, and repreſent the adverſe cauſe with great diſadvantages; ſo that we may almoſt generally conclude, that injuſtice ever accompanies contention: And hence it is, that in all differences, while each party naturally takes upon them to be judge in their own cauſe, they proceed with ſo much ſeverity againſt each other, and paſs ſuch cenſures, as raiſe wonder in indifferent perſons, and ſcandal too: Hence a little breach comes ſoon to be widened, and a ground is laid for great animoſities and averſions, which ſpreading amongſt the favourers of each ſide, are ſcarce ever to be healed, but

become irremediable evils by being propagated to generations. This misfortune would not be ſo very conſiderable, were it confined to private perſons and men of no principles; but it is a Chriſtian's ſurprize to ſee it ſpread ſo much beyond theſe, that even profeſſed piety and religion are not exempt from it, not the enclofure, not the ſanctuary, nor the altar: So that being of a nature ſo pernicious to Chriſtianity, that it ought not to be found where this is profeſſed; it is, notwithſtanding this, found every where, as if living in contention were not injurious to a good conſcience, and the breach of peace were conſiſtent with true piety: Thus truly one would gueſs by the great and almoſt general differences kept up amongſt Chriſtians, who are but too eaſy, God knows, upon very inconſiderable grounds of opinion and intereſt, to tranſgreſs in this fundamental point, and let private motives far outweigh the public: Whereas it is their duty to purchaſe peace at any rate, and be willing to yield in many other points for the ſecurity of this. For, *if any man ſeem to be contentious, we have no ſuch cuſtom*, ſays St. *Paul*, *nor the church of God.* And St. *Gregory* was ſo true a diſciple of his, that he declares himſelf willing, *rather to ſubſcribe to another's judg-*

ment contrary to his own, without prejudice to faith, than be contentious with him. I wiſh St. *Paul* had more diſciples of this mind, who would not only read his epiſtles, but be careful to obſerve them, and particularly in being ſolicitous to preſerve *unity*, and have a due regard to *peace*; as a fruit of the ſpirit. It is this ought to diſtinguiſh Chriſtians from all others; and this charge they have from Chriſt himſelf; and without this, there is none can walk worthy of the vocation to which they are called.

Seventeenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. xxii. 35. To the end.

WHAT *is the great commandment in the law?* This queſtion is put to Chriſt by a doctor of the law; and the Goſpel obſerves, his deſign in propoſing it was *tentans eum*, to tempt or lay a ſnare before him. There are three ſorts of enemies of Chriſt mentioned in this chapter, and three ſorts of temptations or ſnares prepared againſt him. The firſt is of the Herodians or politicians, and perſons of the court, concerning the rights of the prince. and matters of ſtate, *ver.* 16. The ſecond, of the Sadducees, or heretics and libertines, about the principles of religion and faith, *ver.* 23. The third, of the Phariſees, or looſe caſuiſts and falſe devotiſts about morality, and here in particular about the love of God. From all theſe Chriſt wonderfully diſengaged himſelf, according to the dictates of his infinite wiſdom, ſo as to ſilence his enemies, and let them

them make no advantage of their malicious deſigns. From his example, the followers of Chriſt cannot be ſurpriſed, if, like their maſter, they cannot live in this world, without having ſpies upon them, and ſuch, whoſe ſecret malice puſhes them on, either to leſſen their reputation, or ſeek their ruin. They have only ſo much more reaſon to be cautious in their actions and anſwers; inaſmuch as the moſt hidden deſigns being manifeſt to Chriſt, they are too often concealed from them, under the cover of a ſeeming civility, and pretended eſteem; and therefore obliges them, not only to a prudent reſervedneſs, but, moſt of all, to ſolicit heaven daily; that by a ſupernatural wiſdom they may be armed againſt all ſnares, and ſecured againſt the dangers of their own indiſcreet candour, groundleſs confidence in others, or immoderate poſitiveneſs in their own thoughts.

And this is not only to be in regard of enemies, but of friends too; the goodneſs and credulous temper of thoſe, with whom we converſe, being often a ſnare to us. The more confidence perſons have in us, the more we are obliged to be on our guard, that we may not hurt them by what we ſay, who are ready to take all

for a rule. However therefore there be danger in converſing with ſuch as are averſe to us; yet I think there are no perſons, with whom we are bound to be more circumſpect and obſerve ſtricter meaſures than thoſe, who are prepared to take after our example, ſince whatever we expoſe to their eyes, is ſubject to be copied; and, if it will not bear it, who muſt anſwer for the conſequences of ſuch indiſcretion? Thus then we may truly ſay, we live in the midſt of ſnares, and are ever in danger of being ſurpriſed in them, if the communication of Chriſt's heavenly wiſdom be not our light to diſcern them, and our ſtrength to avoid them.

The demand being made to Chriſt, as above, he thus anſwers the queſtion. *Thou ſhalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, with all thy ſoul, and with all thy mind: This*, ſays he, *is the firſt and greateſt commandment.* It is the greateſt in *Dignity*, becauſe it immediately regards God himſelf: In *Juſtice*, becauſe it alone renders to God, what belongs to God, giving him the preference to all things: In *Power*, becauſe it makes God alone reign in our hearts, and unites man to God: In *Extent*, becauſe it leaves nothing to the creature, which it does not refer to God: In *Ne-*

ceſſity, becauſe it is indiſpenſable: In *Duration*, becauſe being not to be interrupted on earth, it is to laſt for all eternity in heaven.

The love of God, being thus the greateſt of all the commandments, it muſt be the chriſtian's greateſt intereſt to ſatisfy it; and his care in complying with it, ought to be anſwerable to the greatneſs of the command, and to the intereſt he has in it: That is, it ought to exceed all other cares and concerns, whether for health, liberty, life, or any other convenience or advantage of this world. O God! How miſerable then am I, who daily feel the weight of ſo many other things preſſing upon my ſpirits, above the concern of loving Thee!

It were to be wiſhed, that chriſtians could come ſo far in this point, as to find the love of God bearing upon their hearts with ſuch a weight, as to make them as earneſt in doing the will of God, as eager in pleaſing him, as deſirous of enjoying him, as parents are in regard of their children, whom they love, and friends of their friends, whom they admire, and are ſolicitous more ſtrictly to engage to them. Such an inclination or bent of the heart, carrying it along with a ſweet

violence, through all duties and difficulties of life is the moſt deſirable comfort a chriſtian can hope for in this life; and that will give him the ſtrongeſt aſſurance of being prepared for a better.

But it being a privilege granted to few, to have the love of God thus ſenſibly to work upon the affections, it ought not to be a ſubject of grief to chriſtians, if they thus find it not; they are to be contented with whatever diſpenſations of grace and love God ſhall grant them, and in the manner he ſhall pleaſe: Their greater concern ought to be, rather to find the effects, than the feeling or ſenſe of it; and therefore, if, upon obſervation, they can diſcover, that they bring forth its fruits in avoiding ſin, and whatever God forbids, and in a zealous compliance with what they know to be his will, ſo as not to permit either the natural affection to creatures, or the love of convenience, intereſt, pleaſure, or any earthly ſatisfactions, to take place of duty but are ever ready to quit whatever is not conſiſtent with it, or puts it in hazard; this ought to give reſt to their ſouls, and be ſufficient argument to hope, that the kingdom of God is in them; that is, that God rules in them; and that his love is maſter of their hearts; and where

this fruit is not found, there is nothing elſe can give a grounded ſatisfaction; but ſuch chriſtians are to ſuſpect themſelves of being hypocrites or counterfeits, whatever their habit, profeſſion, or remarkable zeal otherwiſe be, though ſufficient to gain the reputation of being ſaints in the eſteem of men.

But this life being not a ſtate of perfection, it is ſcarce to be expected, that the love of God ſhould ſo entirely poſſeſs the heart, as to exclude the love of all other things. If the love of God has the firſt place in our heart, ſo that we give God the preference to all things, and let nothing have the preference to him, we in this ſatisfy the ſubſtance of this precept. But however, there may be ſtill many imperfections, as in the deſire and love of creatures; not ſo as to make them our laſt end, for this would be criminal, but only in ſuch a moderate way, as rather to be ſome hinderance, than interrupt our courſe towards God: In this degree, it cannot be denied, but ſuch voluntary affections are in themſelves evil; and yet it cannot be thought, that God will impute them to us as crimes which deprive us of his grace, and baniſh us his preſence; ſince though they are the occaſion of our taking ſome

falſe ſteps, in ſome voluntary conſent to the love of creatures; yet it is not in ſuch capital points, to which he has declared his abhorrence, with the puniſhment annexed of a perpetual excluſion from him.

All love of creatures therefore is not mortal, becauſe it has not always the command of our hearts, ſo as to render us ſlaves to it. But however, it fails not to be always dangerous; and is the beginning of ſervitude, in moving the heart by fear, by hope, by deſires, and by continual endeavours of bringing it into a total ſubjection; and ſince by this way, it is in danger of loſing ground, by inſenſibly yielding to ſuch attempts; hence are all obliged to look upon ſuch affections as their unhappineſs, and make it the ſubject of their daily prayers and labours, to weaken and overcome them.

When they are involuntary, and the effect of temper, they are a perplexing exerciſe, ſuch as are very tireſome to good ſouls; but whatever their violence and continuance be, the guilt cannot be charged upon them, more than other corrupt inclinations, which they never feel but with diſlike: In this caſe, patience and humility is to be their help, rather than penance; and anxiouſly to diſquiet

themſelves, muſt be judged indiſcretion. But the caſe is otherwiſe, when dangerous affections are voluntary; for in theſe, Man being ſubject to great partiality and blindneſs, a neglect of them may be eaſily followed with very criminal exceſſes. Thus ſtands our caſe, O God, that while we are commanded to love thee with all our hearts, we are ever in danger of being unhappily drawn from thee by thy creatures; which, when we ſeriouſly conſider, and put them in the balance againſt thee, we can only admire, and be confounded at our folly, in being thus diverted, by the ſatisfaction of momentary trifles, from ſeeking the poſſeſſion of thee, our Infinite and Everlaſting Good. Help us, O God, in this our miſery; ſtrengthen our reaſon and faith againſt ſuch madneſs: permit us no more to let the love of creatures take thy place in our hearts; but as we deſire the eternal enjoyment of thee, ſo give us grace to ſeek it, by loving thee, as thou commandeſt, with all our hearts, and with all our ſouls.

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Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

1 *Cor.* i. 4. Ends verſe 8.

I *Always give thanks to God for you, for the grace of God, which has been given you in Chriſt Jeſus.* The bleſſings of God had made ſuch a deep impreſſion in the heart of St. *Paul*, that he was not content with a paſſing and ſuperficial thankſgiving; but he gave thanks always; not permitting preſent employments to blot out the memory of paſt mercies, nor even thoſe which God had beſtowed upon others. This was a holy diſpoſition in St. *Paul;* a fruit of his perfect charity, of his zeal for their good, and of the great idea he had of God's graces; and may be eaſily comprehended, if we compare ourſelves to this great Apoſtle, by conſidering how little we are touched with the bleſſings of heaven, eſpecially thoſe which others receive. We, for our parts, hear a thouſand inſtances of theſe, and as ſoon forget

them; we have but a very imperfect ſenſe of them, even while they are reported; and few are ſolicitous, beyond the formality of a phraſe, to render thanks for them; and if happening to be our nearer concern, they draw from us a more hearty thankſgiving upon the ſpot: Yet new affairs ſucceeding, ſoon ſtifle all theſe motions of gratitude; the heart is taken up with other concerns; preſent objects remove the paſt out of ſight; and we cannot with truth ſay with St. *Paul*, that we give God thanks always for his paſt bleſſings, becauſe we do not ſo much as think of them. In this is our great misfortune; we know only then to value God's bleſſings when we want them: And we are no ſooner in poſſeſſion of them, but their price preſently falls, and generally is quite forgotten. How valuable is eaſe to us in time of pain; health in time of ſickneſs; quiet in time of trouble; peace in time of perſecution; ſecurity in time of danger; and how much do we in theſe circumſtances, offer for the purchaſe of what we deſire? When God's mercy favouring our wiſhes, a ſhort enjoyment preſently takes off from their value, we grow cold and inſenſible; and a long poſſeſſion, which ſhould, in juſtice, increaſe

our gratitude, only ſerves us as a motive to abuſe them againſt the giver: And by this our ungrateful ſtupidity, I do not queſtion, we often oblige the divine Goodneſs to interrupt our peaceable enjoyments, by taking his mercies from us, and viſiting us with ſcourges; that by theſe he may awaken us, and make us ſenſible of his favours, and force us to a more chriſtian uſe of them. So that, inſtead of being like St. *Paul*, in giving continual thanks for ſuch bleſſings, which others receive, we ſcarce give ſhort thanks for our own; and therefore are more juſtly reſembled by the *Ten Lepers* healed in the goſpel, of which number there was only one found, that returned with gratitude to acknowledge the mercy of his cure: For truly I wiſh this be not the proportion of grateful chriſtians; for who can tell me there is more than one in ten, that gives thanks as they ought?

This we have but too much reaſon to apprehend, if we conſider the general abuſe of God's bleſſing amongſt chriſtians, and that thoſe who enjoy the largeſt ſhare of them, inſtead of being grateful, are the perſons who abuſe them moſt. Thus we ſee, there are none more bold offenders, than thoſe of the ſtrongeſt conſtitution,

who ſeem ſecure of health. Thoſe, who have the advantage of beauty, or exact proportion, have generally ſo many degrees of vanity and pride: Thoſe, whoſe natural eloquence makes them admired, but too commonly ſhew their art in hurtful flatteries, ſinful perſuaſions, in raileries, and ridiculing of their neighbours: And thoſe who are bleſſed with plenty, are not they the perſons, above all others, who keep up the credit, and give authority to vice; who waſte their eſtates in idleneſs, luxury, and all manner of exceſſes? This is the common method even of the chriſtian world; ſo that inſtead of making proportioned returns to heaven of what they receive, all is perverted, and made the unhappy inſtruments of ſin. Good example and piety is not now the conſequence of greater bleſſings; but where theſe moſt abound, there is iniquity in its greateſt ſtate. And I wiſh this were the character of thoſe only, who, by their vicious lives, ſeem to have renounced all right to heaven; for there is but too great reaſon to fear, that infinite others, who ſeem to keep within ſome bounds, ſhare in this ungrateful guilt, though in a leſs offenſive way. For where are the perſons, who being any ways bleſſed above

others, do not turn theſe very bleſſings into the increaſe of ſelf-love, and the love of the world; ſo that, whilſt, by the particular beneſits of heaven, they are in juſtice bound to approach nearer God by proportioned ſteps of love, they are too often found to depart ſtill farther from him? It is thus the moderate chriſtian, though free from vice, yet ſtill according to his ſtock, makes his advance in the vanity both of cloaths and table; and thoſe ſelf-denials, which, under a ſtrait fortune, he uſed to practiſe, now, upon favourable additions, he quite lays by; he toils no more, and under this mechanic notion, withdraws himſelf from all employment; he ſtudies now his eaſe, ſeeks better company, and by degrees, expenſive diverſions become his buſineſs; and thus employed, goes on unthinking, till his laſt ſickneſs ending all his ſport, puts him upon being ſerious, to make an untoward preparation for that which ought to have been the great concern of his health and life. It is thus the addition of mercies, mercies I ſay, abuſed, makes an induſtrious, careful, and pious man, become a man of idleneſs and eaſe, a man of inclination and appetite, a man of ſenſe and of this world; the more he

receives from God: It is only to pleaſe himſelf the more, and not the giver; it is to make him love the creatures more, and his Creator leſs.

And where is now the gratitude in this? Where is the ſpirit of St. *Paul*, which ſhould be ever giving thanks, and making of every bleſſing, a new ſtep to heaven? It is thus it ought to be in chriſtians. For is not every good received, a gift of the Divine Bounty; is it not as ſo much ſeed, from which moſt juſtly God expects the fruit? And where is this fruit, if all be abuſed, and turned to idleneſs or ſin? It is plain then, all we receive from God, ought in ſome manner to be returned to him: *Redeant flumina unde manarunt.* All ought to appear in the harveſt, not only of grateful words, but of a more chriſtian life. Thus whatever the bleſſings be, whether of plenty, peace, good name, children, or any ſucceſs, theſe ought to be ever followed with the effects of a true grateful heart, in ſo many degrees of piety, and approaches made to God, in loving and ſerving him more faithfully, and a ſolicitude of applying his gifts to the end for which he gave them; to his honour, and their own (not ſo much worldly, as) eternal good. This is St. *Paul*'s inſtruc-

tion; a life of chriſtian piety being the only perpetual thanks. And certainly moſt unhappy are they, who do not this: For ſince the account we are to give, ſtill daily increaſes in proportion to the bleſſings we receive, muſt not the day of accounts be diſmal to them, who, upon looking back on their whole life, find, that inſtead of making returns to God for all his mercies, in the gratitude of an holy life, they have perverted them to the love of themſelves and this world, and thus abuſed them all, in making them the unhappy occaſions of offending him more? Deliver us, O God, from this ingratitude; and and as thou poureſt forth thy bleſſings on us, ſo let this one bleſſing more of thy grace ever attend them, which may effectually teach us how to uſe them; that we may never more pervert thy bleſſings into curſes, but grow daily in virtue, as they increaſe upon us; and thus, in the ſweet ſavour of a holy life, offer thee a pepetual thankſgiving.

Eighteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. ix. 1. Ends verſe 8.

THEY laid before him one ſick of the palſy, lying on a bed. This is the perſon mentioned by St. *Luke*, chap. v. who being brought by his friends to Chriſt, and finding no poſſibility of coming up to him, becauſe of the crowd, they opened the roof of the houſe, and with cords let him down on his bed before him. This their induſtrious charity was ſoon approved by Chriſt; who, as the goſpel ſays, *videns fidem illorum, ſeeing their faith*, preſently turned to the ſick man, and comforted him with the hopes of his immediate cure. This effect, their charity had upon Chriſt, in moving him to a preſent compaſſion, ought to be an encouragement to all others, to ſeek his help by the ſame method. The infinite miſeries, to which we are ſubject in this life, both as to ſoul and body, are proof enough of the continual

want we have of his aſſiſtance; and many of theſe are ſo preſſing, that they often put us upon conſidering, what may be the moſt effectual means for obliging him to come in to our relief. This point is here ſo fully anſwered, that I think none, who deſire his help, can be in doubt of the way they are to take for prevailing on his goodneſs. And ſince the method is ſuch, that there are no circumſtances, wherein chriſtians have not the opportunity of practiſing it, there can be none but thoſe, who, inſenſible of their own miſeries, deſire no help, that do not undertake it.

The practice here directly encouraged, is that of giving aſſiſtance to the ſick; and in this point the charity of many perſons and families is very remarkable, who have not only their doors always open to the poor, and medicines provided for their infirmities, but are likewiſe ready to give them attendance, and leave all other buſineſs for their comfort and relief. How much better is money and time employed in making proviſion for ſuch charities, than in preparing curioſities, which are never called for by neceſſity, but only to anſwer the endleſs, but ſuperfluous demand of an indulged appetite! Whilſt the greater number therefore of chriſtians are

thus laying out their money, in ways that will never be taken in accounts, I encourage theſe better ſtewards to go on in their charitable method of helping the poor; and I dare be their ſecurity, ſince I have Chriſt's word to be mine, that God will be their faithful rewarder, in making all that their own intereſt, which has been employed for the relief of their neighbour's diſtreſs. I only wonder, that amongſt ſuch numbers who are every way capable of doing good to themſelves, by being phyſicians and comforters of the poor; there are ſo few, who ſeek to make an intereſt with heaven this way, but chooſe rather to pleaſe themſelves in idleneſs, than thus honourably to work for heaven.

Beſides this, there are many other ways, even as many as our neighbour is in want of our aſſiſtance, and we are capable of giving it, by which we may render heaven propitious to us. And this may be extended ſo far, as poſitively to pronounce, that there is not any ſervice ſo mean and inconſiderable, but it is in our power, by putting our hand to it, as occaſion may ſeem to call us, to make it an act of charity, much more ſerviceable to ourſelves, than to thoſe we ſeem to help. Whence

they have reaſon to bleſs God for their happy diſpoſition, who make no exceptions againſt any thing they can do, but free from all niceneſs in this affair, are ever ready and cheerful in lending a hand, wherever there appears occaſion, that demands their help; for theſe live in the continual practice of charity; and there is nothing wanting for making it their eternal advantage, but raiſing it above natural inclination, and offering it a ſacrifice to God in compliance with his will, who has declared his acceptance of it. And as for thoſe, who will go on no further than ſtrict obligation ſeems to be a force upon them, but are ever diſputing upon terms, bounds and privileges, and will not take one ſtep beyond the evidence of theſe, without grumbling; I think they have reaſon to reſent their own ill temper, and take all pains in overcoming it; for that the principal ingredients of it are nothing better than pride and lazineſs; and as theſe muſt render them ridiculous to men, ſo they muſt certainly bring them into the diſpleaſure of God; ſince they muſt neceſſarily fall into many ſinful omiſſions, who are with this niceneſs ſo often ſtanding upon terms.

Beſides theſe temporal charities, there are many ſpiritual; one principal of theſe, and obvious to all, through their iniquity or raſhneſs, with whom we converſe or live, is that of puting our neighbour in mind of his faults, in ſuch a manner as may encourage him to be more careful, and reform. This I here mention, becauſe St. *Auguſtin* judges the omiſſion of it a great failing in the good, to be ſenſible of the great provocation the common ſins of men give to God, and with what rigorous puniſhment he threatens them, and yet to paſs them by without cenſure or reproof, as if there was nothing ſinful in them. This he preſſes ſo far in his *City of God*, as to think this omiſſion to have been the principal occaſion of that ſevere judgment, in his days, upon *Rome* and *Italy*, when the *Goths* coming in like a torrent, laid all waſte with a common deſtruction. And he charges the guilt of this omiſſion in particular upon the good; for that, though it was commendable in them, to diſtinguiſh themſelves from the wicked, by not concurring in their crimes; yet their ſilence in not reproving, was culpable, ſince there was nothing could ſuſpend this charity, but only ſloth, vicious baſhfulneſs, or the fear of diſ-

pleaſing, in the attempt of doing them good. It is true, there is a great prudence neceſſary in performing this charity, but however, it may very often be ſafely practiſed; and I fear, the great reaſon of ſilence, is rather the weakneſſes cenſured by St. *Auguſtin*, than the judgment of diſcretion.

But however, it was not only the charity of thoſe, that brought the ſick man, but his own interior diſpoſition, that prevailed on Chriſt for his ſpeedy cure: For ſince we hear Chriſt thus ſpeaking to him; *Son, have confidence, thy ſins are forgiven thee*, it cannot be doubted, but he had greater ſenſe of the diſtemper of his ſoul, than of his body; that while his charitable friends expected the cure of his palſy, he himſelf deſired more earneſtly the pardon of his ſins; and that it was to anſwer his deſire, Jeſus Chriſt ſaid to him, *Have confidence, thy ſins are forgiven thee*: Since the pardon of ſins is granted to none, but thoſe who ſincerely deſire it. And whilſt we ſee the ſick man thus cured of his infirmity; and that the ſame words, which declared the health of his ſoul, gave him health of his body; have not we in this a plain inſtruction, that ſickneſs is to be looked upon as the puniſh-

ment of ſin; and therefore, that under all diſtempers it is moſt adviſable to look into the firſt cauſe, and like this paralytic, to be more earneſt for obtaining pardon of ſin; than the cure of the diſtemper, or at leaſt, to ſeek health by the recovery of grace. This muſt be a good practice under all misfortunes; for though the motives of Providence in appointing, or permitting them, may be many; yet one general cauſe being in puniſhment of ſin, a chriſtian may ſafely look on them, as the ſigns of God's diſpleaſure, and the effects of ſin; and therefore at their firſt approach cannot do better, than to make his peace with God, and in the ſpirit of true penance, labour to turn away his anger from him; in which he cannot fail of a good effect either in removing his affliction, or in obtaining ſuch ſuccours from God, by which we may be enabled to ſuffer with patience, and make an advantage of his trial.

This is much more to the purpoſe, than to complain of his burthen, and anxiouſly to diſquiet himſelf, in conſidering what may be the occaſion of the ſcourge, or to ſit down dejected upon the ſuppoſition of God being angry; for this is yielding to the deſigns of the enemy, who thus

contrives to oppreſs his ſoul with darkneſs, and by interior confuſion, to prevent all the fruit of his ſufferings: Whilſt a ſincere repentance, joined with an humble ſubmiſſion to the orders of providence, will either remove the evils, or make them means of ſalvation. Wherefore, O God, I here make my humble petition to thee, that, at whatever time thou ſhalt viſit me with affliction or ſickneſs, I may not then forget the method of improving under it, by letting impatience or dejection oppreſs my ſoul; but looking on it as a ſummons to repentance, I may be ſolicitous to make my peace with thee, and then peaceably wait the iſſue thy goodneſs has appointed. In the mean time, let me be induſtrious, in contributing all ways I am able, to the help of my neighbour; that ſo I may hope to find the effects of thy power and mercy, when the hour of diſtreſs ſhall come upon me.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſ. iv. 23. Ends Verſe 28.

PUT *on the new man, which is created according to God, in juſtice and ſanctity of Truth.* One would think in the ſearch and profeſſion of virtue there were no danger of miſcarriage, becauſe virtue itſelf ſeems a ſecurity againſt all ſnares; and ſo certainly it is, when it is according to God in juſtice and ſanctity of truth. But here is a great part of our misfortune, that when by a laborious diligence we have diſengaged ourſelves from all vicious habits, and now ſeem fitted to become true followers of Chriſt, we even find a way, by more ſubtil artifices, to adulterate the very virtues themſelves, and to live at as great a diſtance from God in the profeſſion of reputed virtues, as when engaged in the open practice of vice; and this is a ſtate ſo much more dangerous than the former, as the evils of it are more undiſcernable. I

ſay not this to terrify ſincere ſouls, but to give a caution to as many as pretend to virtue, to be ſincere in what they do; and while they renounce the carnal enemy, to be careful not to reſt contented under the conduct of the ſpiritual one; but in putting on the new man, to be ever ſolicitous, that it be that new man mentioned by the Apoſtle, which is created according to God in Juſtice and truth.

For as there is humility, mercy, piety, patience, *&c.* of the new man created according to God; ſo there is a falſe humility, falſe mercy, falſe piety and patience, which are of the old man, not created according to God, but the evident effects of our corruption. For whenever theſe proceed from no other root, but of ſelf-love, convenience, intereſt, or other worldly and human reſpects, what better character do they deſerve? And is it not thus chriſtians are too often miſerably deluded, when being very edifying and exemplary in all thoſe practices, which are the accompliſhments of their profeſſion, and make them honoured by as many as are witneſſes of their actions, they have no other motives after all, of what they do, but ſome worldly conſiderations, which oblige them to this more than ordinary

dinary regularity? One, for example, is liberal to the poor, and in this ſeeks to be eſteemed charitable: Another, with a wonderful humility, ſtoops chearfully to mean employments, and it is only to gain the opinion of ſome, that by their intereſt he may be preferred. A third bears reproachful and injurious language with admirable patience, becauſe he dreads the uneaſineſs of contention. A fourth, with great reſolution, ſtands againſt all ſolicitation to evil, becauſe by yielding, is apprehended the loſs of honour and of friends. A fifth cenſures and avoids all the expenſive extravagancy of the age, as to dreſſes, gaming, and entertainments; becauſe he adores his money, and cannot be modiſh *gratis*. A ſixth is ready to undertake any charitable office for a friend, but is ever careful to ſow on rich ground, which he knows is likely to make a good return. A ſeventh avoids being criminal, apprehending the difficulty and ſhame of afterwards confeſſing the guilt. An eighth preſerves innocence, becauſe ſin diſturbs his eaſe. A ninth is frequent in the moſt ſacred duties, but it is becauſe others are ſo; becauſe it is expected, or out of cuſtom, or to eſcape reproof. A tenth is laborious and edifying in a religious way, but it is ever in public, where

there is a proſpect of credit or preferment. Thus it is but too often, in the practice of a Chriſtian life, that pride, ſelf-love, and intereſt, are the only ſupport of all its reputed ſanctity. And how far is this from the new man here recommended by the apoſtle, being wholly void of juſtice and truth? There may be enough indeed to gain ſome reputation with men, who regarding only the outſide of actions, cannot judge of the interior; but this cannot deceive Him, who is the ſearcher of hearts, who will ſeparate the gold from the droſs, and lay open all theſe counterfeits of piety; *Juſtitias judicabit.* For however angelical the looks may be, he will ſtill diſcover the cloven foot of ſelf-love and intereſt that lies concealed, and ſhew the virtue of theſe men to have had no better ſupport.

And (where the motive is ſinful) what other reward can be expected from his juſt hand, but the puniſhment of vice, and ſuch vice, which has proſtituted the moſt ſacred actions to their own baſe ends, made heaven ſerve earth, and abuſed religion to advance and ſanctify their own corruption? Such vice, by which they rob the Almighty of what belongs to him, only to ſeek and ſet up themſelves? For certainly God being eſſentially *Alpha* and *Omega*, the *Beginning* and the

End of all, he ought to be ſo to us in all we do. Our humility, our charity, our patience, and whatever is good, ought ever to be begun in him, becauſe he requires theſe to be the practices of a Chriſtian life, and demands them from us. They are all again to end in him, by being offered to the honour of his name, and as the accompliſhment of his holy will in us. This is the *truth* and *juſtice*, which ought to be in all our ſanctity; and without this, whatever ſanctity we profeſs, it is being unjuſt to God; it is lying to the world, and nothing better than deceiving our own ſouls.

How careful then is the good Chriſtian to be, not to ſeek temporals by eternals; but to put on that new man, which is created according to God, in juſtice and ſanctity of truth, and ſincerely endeavour to give to God what in juſtice and truth belongs to him? And though having done his beſt, he will ſcarce ever ſo wholly gain this point, as to hinder pride, vanity, and ſelf-love from creeping in even to his moſt religious duties; yet ſo far may it be obtained, as ever to act upon better motives of an eternal weight; and if theſe buſy evils will be importunely hovering and putting in for a ſhare in all that is done, like the birds about *Abraham's* ſacrifice; upon reflection

they may be renounced, and with the Patriarch's watchful ſtaff, be chaſed away. They are truly pernicious to all that is good, according to the place they have: For if they go before us, and we are moved to undertake and act with them in view; our actions cannot then be chriſtian, which follow ſuch corrupt guides: If they join in, as it were by accident, and go on accompanying us in what we do, they greatly leſſen the value of all that is virtuouſly begun: but if they only follow after, then their malice is much leſs; and if renounced, can do no prejudice by ſuch attempts. A watchful care is therefore very neceſſary in this our imperfect ſtate, where with all our diligence, it is difficult to diſcern the true motives on which we daily act. It is an ill ſign when we are cold and negligent in all ſuch duties, where we have only God for witneſs, and no worldly reſpect to puſh us on: and then moſt vigorous, when intereſt and the eyes of men do give them encouragement: though ſometimes too, I queſtion not, but virtue makes uſe of theſe its enemies, without much injury: They are crooked ſtaves indeed, but yet in ſome degree may help us on; ſince the moſt exact rules make uſe of *fear* and *ſhame* for the ſecurity of a regular and well-diſciplined life; and it may be al-

lowed the beſt, to fortify and defend themſelves by theſe inferior motives. We are to purſue virtue, indeed, but upon better grounds; but, on occaſion, to take the advantage of theſe helps, cannot be reproved; for this is only to make uſe of earth, for the gaining heaven Help us then, O God, in this our dangerous ſtate; and ſince our own inſincerity is the occaſion of our having no certain aſſurance of the motives on which we act; grant that this uncertainty may ever keep us humble, and in a perpetual dependence on thy grace; and though I may be ignorant of my own ways, yet ſtill preſerve me in the right; that in pretending to what is commendable and virtuous, I may ever proceed according to juſtice and truth.

Nineteenth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. xxii. 1. Ends verſe 14.

HE *ſent his ſervants to call to the marriage thoſe who were invited, and they would not come.* The whole Goſpel is a parable, in which, under the figure of a king inviting gueſts to the marriage of his ſon, is expreſſed the goodneſs of God calling all to the faith of his Son made man, and by this faith to be gueſts at his table, in the poſſeſſion of eternal happineſs; and under the figure of thoſe, who, being invited, neglected to come to the marriage, is repreſented the unhappy occaſion of their miſery who periſh; where it is plainly ſhewn, that it is through their own fault in neglecting the ſummons of mercy which calls upon them, and making ſuch things their hinderance which ought not to be ſo. The mercy of God here manifeſted, exacts from us a continual homage of adoration and thanks; for that, without any motive on our parts, he has provided for our happineſs, and called

us to the enjoyment of it, though wholly unworthy. The general neglect on the part of man, is that which challenges both our tears and confuſion; for that the acceptance of this mercy being his intereſt alone, and even his eternal intereſt, he is ſo ungratefully careleſs in it, as to put by this concern for momentary trifles, ſuch as muſt ſoon be taken from him, and be the occaſion of his everlaſting miſery, through the injuſtice of his choice. Happy we, if we could be ſo truly ſenſible of this folly this day, as to let the conſideration be the means of preventing our being an inſtance of it.

Of thoſe who refuſed to go to the marriage, three ſorts are here mentioned: Firſt, one who went to his country-houſe. Secondly, another who was buſied in his traffick. Laſtly, others who ſeized and killed the ſervants who went to call them. In which are ſignified three ſtates, in danger of living unmindful of God and ſalvation, without regarding any calls from heaven: Firſt, the ſoft, idle, and voluptuous life, where the only concern is peaceably to enjoy health, goods, conveniencies, good cheer, public divertiſements, and private pleaſures. Secondly, the buſy life, taken up in a multiplicity of affairs, and gainful

employments; where the love of riches, and earneſt application of the mind to promiſing occaſions, ſtifle all thoughts of ſalvation, and ſteal away the time which ought to be given to it. Laſtly, the unjuſt life, that is, of ſuch as live in profeſſed wickedneſs, who not only neglect the ways of ſalvation, but likewiſe expreſs their diſlike againſt thoſe who are willing to open their eyes, and put them into the way of truth.

Under theſe three heads are compriſed all thoſe unhappy ones, who, being deaf to the invitations of mercy, exclude themſelves for ever from it; and being mentioned by Chriſt himſelf, ought to raiſe a ſolicitude in all Chriſtians that they fall not under them. But this part of the parable ſeeming to point at thoſe who are called to the belief of Chriſt's truth, that by a union in faith, they may be admitted to a participation of his table; it ought principally to alarm thoſe, who having reaſons enough to doubt of their being members of this ſociety, upon worldly motives forbear all farther enquiry, and thus fall under the guilt of the gueſts invited; who, upon being hindered by ſuch like excuſes, are here condemned becauſe *they would not come.* It cannot be queſtioned, but that ſince truth has not only its difficulties, ſuch as are not

to be overcome but by the application of a ſincere and induſtrious mind, but likewiſe lies under many temporal diſadvantages, ſo that the profeſſion of it is generally accompanied with the loſs of eſteem as to the world, and with the hazard of fortune too; it cannot be queſtioned, I ſay, but many are eaſily perſuaded to ſtifle whatever glimpſes or beams of light are deſigned to call them to it, diſcouraged by the difficulty or trouble that appears in obeying ſuch a ſummons.

Upon this account, how many are there who, like *Agrippa*, are *almoſt perſuaded* to to be what they ſhould be, but have not courage to take one ſtep farther? How many, like *Felix*, have ſuch a ſenſe of truth as even to tremble at it, or at the thought of their own circumſtances; and yet, like him, want a *convenient ſeaſon* for hearing farther, and can never find it? How many, like *Demetrius* the ſilverſmith, upon the proſpect of their being loſers by it, ſtand at a diſtance, and make an intereſt againſt it? Too many there are, followers of theſe unhappy men, who ſtand out againſt the invitations of heaven, and againſt the opportunities of better information, over-ruled by variety of paſſions, by ſelf-love, by the love of eaſe, convenience, intereſt, and ambition; or ſo

taken up with buſineſs, or the liberties of life, that they cannot find a convenient ſeaſon; and hence, either contemn the ways of truth, by the violent impreſſions of a worldly ſpirit; or, by the arguments of a biaſſed judgment, falſly perſuade themſelves of the non-neceſſity of making a change, upon the ſeeming conviction of the way of truth being broad enough to include them in it as they are. In this manner great numbers deceive themſelves: But ſince it is evident from this Goſpel, that many who are called by God to ſit down at the table of Chriſt, by ſuch excuſes exclude themſelves for ever from it; have not all reaſon to make a ſtricter examen of their ſtate, that ſo they incur not the guilt of contemned mercy, which they ſee here puniſhed with ſuch ſeverity of an eternal baniſhment from heaven? O God, how much eaſier is it to receive thy truths, with all their preſent inconveniences, than to leave the conviction to the terror of thy judgments?

But the ſubject of this parable is of a greater extent, ſince we ſee, in the perſon of him, who being admitted to the banquet, was afterwards caſt out for not having a wedding garment; they alſo are concerned, who are gueſts at the marriage, and united to Chriſt by faith: So far, that if theſe have

not their nuptial robe, that is, if they put not on the new man, are not veſted with charity, and live not by the Spirit of Chriſt, they ſhall be certainly caſt forth, and have their eternal portion with unbelievers. It is not therefore enough for Chriſtians to ſay, we have obeyed the invitation; we are gueſts at the marriage of the Lamb with his church; we are catholics: For what will it profit to be gueſts at this banquet, when thoſe are thrown out who come unprepared; or ſit there, under the deformities of the old man, in a manner unbecoming the ſanctity of the place? Let theſe then remember, that faith without charity will profit nothing; that faith without good works is dead; that though they have great advantages in the light of true faith, and great helps in being members of Chriſt's church; yet if theſe advantages and helps are all neglected, and they make no benefit of theſe favours received; their account will be ſo much the greater for the mercies they have abuſed, and their damnation will be deeper than of thoſe who have never known the truth.

Thus then, while thoſe are ſhut out from heaven who refuſed to come; and thoſe too, who came to the banquet, unprepared; this makes too evident the concluſion of our

preſent Goſpel; that *many are called, but few are choſen.* And ought not this to awaken all manner of Chriſtians, ſo as neither to neglect the invitation, nor yet to obey it, without being provided with a wedding garment; but to ſtrive, by good works, to make their vocation and election ſure? This is the way preſcribed by Chriſt and his apoſtles; much better than what many take, by preſumptuouſly enquiring into the counſels and decrees of God, and perplexing themſelves with this queſtion, Whether they be of the number of the elect? For this is what cannot be diſcovered in this life, and is nothing but a ſnare, to take off Chriſtians from the practice of the Goſpel, by the unprofitable ſpeculations of a dangerous curioſity. It is enough for Chriſtians, that whatever be the decree of predeſtination, yet theſe certain truths are left to us for our comfort and encouragement: Firſt, That ſuppoſing we be faithful to the call of Heaven, none ſhall want ſufficient grace for their ſalvation. Secondly, That none ſhall be damned, but by their own fault. Laſtly, That it is in our own power to be ſaved if we will. Theſe truths, which faith hath rendered infallible to us, are enough to ſilence curioſity, and to oblige us to a laborious diligence, in purſuing thoſe

ways and means which God has ordained for the obtaining happineſs. This will make ſure what is now in doubt, and place thoſe that follow the advice amongſt the number of the elect. This one thing, O God, I aſk of thee, that neither ſloth, ſelf-love, nor the love of any worldly thing, may take me out of this way which thou haſt manifeſted to be thy will. Thou haſt been infinitely merciful in calling me: Grant that I may be ever found cloathed in a nuptial robe, that ſo, being admitted to the banquet, I may never be caſt out for my unworthineſs.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Matt. v. 15. Ends verſe 21.

BE *not drunk with wine, in which is luxury, but be filled with the Hōly Ghoſt.* Authority and cuſtom have given ſuch countenance to exceſſive drinking, that making a judgment from the common practice of it, even in men of principles and religion, one might be inclined to imagine it very conſiſtent with Chriſtianity and ſalvation. And yet turning to St. *Paul*, we ſee it lie under another character; nothing leſs than damnation being entailed on it; and all thoſe that follow it, being expreſsly cut off from the inheritance of eternal life: For neither *thieves*, ſays he, *nor covetous, nor drunkards, ſhall inherit the kingdom of God*, 1 Cor. vi. 9, 10. Again, *The works of the fleſh are manifeſt; envyings, murders, drunkenneſs, of which I tell you, as I have already declared to you, that they who do ſuch things ſhall not inherit the kingdom of God*, Gal. v. 19, 20, 21. And therefore he enjoins all

the followers of Chriſt, *not to keep company with any man that is called a brother, and is a fornicator, covetous, or a drunkard,* 1 Cor. v. 11. And is it not ſomething ſurpriſing, after theſe woes pronounced againſt this vice, to find Chriſtians ſo familiar with it, that to encourage and draw men into it, is become a friendly part of entertainment; it is nothing but an ordinary diverſion for paſſing ſpare hours; and to declare their guilt in this point, has nothing of ſcandal or defamation in it? It is certain they have not a true idea of this evil; cuſtom has taken off the greateſt part of its horror; and though they experience the moſt pernicious effects of it in themſelves, yet the inſenſibility which this vice ever brings along with it, is a great impediment to its cure, and this is nothing but the juſtice of its puniſhment; that while men purpoſely drown their own reaſon, they ſhould live on, like unreaſonable creatures, ſmarting under the burthen of many heavy inconveniences, without ſeeking juſt means of relief.

There is nothing but this wonderful ſtupidity can carry men on in this practice, attended with ſuch an endleſs train of miſchiefs, whereby they are brought by degrees to neglect, if not wholly omit, all ſpiritual

duties, to expoſe their families to diſorder and ruin, to let their creditors periſh for want, give ill example to others, ſtrengthen their own evil paſſions, and open a way to all manner of wickedneſs, irreligion, and prophaneneſs; ſo that in the end, the true deſcription of this their chriſtian entertainment comes to be the drinking down the comfort of their wives, the proviſion of their children and relations, the bread of the poor, the blood of widows and orphans, and their own damnation to themſelves. Theſe are the true ingredients of their cups; theſe make up the ſubject of their mirth and huzzas; their glaſſes run over with injuſtice, cruelty, and impiety; ſo that *Balthaſar*'s prophaning the veſſels of the temple was but a poor ſhadow of theſe meetings, which confound all that is ſacred, and carry with them repeated abominations and deſolations. And though all riſe not to this exceſs; yet if we conſider the ordinary method of ſuch as are more moderate, and ſee what a general miſ-ſpending there is of their time and money, how unprofitably they live, how they dull their ſpirits, indiſpoſe themſelves for prayer, omit the duties of their family, expoſe themſelves to variety of ſinful diſcourſes, and by degrees waſte their eſtates, we may eaſily diſcover, even in theſe, a ſort

of malignity, which, like a canker, gnaws out the very bowels of the Goſpel. For while this is calling aloud upon Chriſtians to watch and pray, to deny themſelves, to take up their croſs, to crucify the fleſh with all its luſts, to die to the world, to put on the new man, to bring forth worthy fruits of penance, to redeem the time, to give what is ſuperfluous to the poor, to be ever prepared for the laſt hour; their common practice is ſo contrary to this in every point, that inſtead of following, as they are commanded, they rather ſeem to evacuate all the maxims of Chriſt and his apoſtles.

And yet theſe are the Chriſtians of our times; theſe are the men, who are encompaſſed above others, with the bleſſings of plenty, and the dew of heaven: This is the grateful return they make for all they have received; thus they practiſe ſelf-denials, and prepare for eternity; living a reproach to their religion, a ſcandal to Chriſtianity; and what a preſumptuous expectation of a miraculous grace muſt they look for, if they think of dying better than they have lived? And were this the caſe only of ſome few, it were not ſo much to be lamented; but to reflect that this evil is ſpread on all ſides; that it is ſo common, that a ſober man muſt either live buried at home, with-

out converſation; or run the hazard of this ſhipwreck, if he ventures abroad; that they are not contented with their own misfortune, but are ever ſoliciting and importuning, till they have communicated their evil, and made their friends as vicious as themſelves? This is a thing deſerves the prayers and tears of all good Chriſtians, and ought to excite in thoſe gentlemen who live in the circumſtances, a zeal of reclaiming their country from the infamy of this brutiſh exceſs. Thoſe who are truly ſenſible of their own repeated tranſgreſſions, and the ill example they have given in this point, can no ways make a juſter recompenſe of their paſt extravagances, than by now countenancing moderation and ſobriety, and ſo far by their example encouraging it, as forthwith to quit all thoſe who promote the practice of their wonted exceſſes; that as far as formerly they have contributed to the propagation of this vice, they may now labour for its reformation. And would not thoſe worthy perſons do ſervice to themſelves and their neighbours, who being not yet infected with this evil, would reſolutely ſtand to their principles of ſobriety, and never permit themſelves to be overcome by the unreaſonable importunity of friends? A courage in this particular

would be gallant, and very becoming the profeſſors of the goſpel: And though it might be expoſed, for the preſent, to the reproaches of ſome wet jeſts, yet all theſe would ſoon be wiped off; and thoſe very perſons would commend, when ſober, what over their cups they have railed at as unſociable and ridiculous. It is but once or twice with reſolution declaring their minds, and ſtoutly ſtanding to it, and they are for ever ſecure; when yielding but once, puts them ever in danger, by diſcovering that weakneſs, that they may be overcome: And who does not ſee, it is much eaſier ſtanding their ground at firſt, than to retire when once drawn in: It is by a weak compliance many have been irrecoverably loſt, by engaging in an evil they have at firſt deteſted; and the thoughts of withdrawing at a ſeaſonable time, have only ſerved to enſnare them into the extremity of miſchief, and put them upon being promoters of what they began with diſlike. This therefore is not the way: No, it muſt be a certain ſteadineſs of mind, immoveable in all attempts, that can here be expected to gain the point; and, I queſtion not, were there an aſſociation of ſome reſolute ſouls, to undertake the cauſe of ſobriety, but they would ſoon find encouragement in their

ſucceſs. By this way, all ſober converſation would be countenanced, gentlemen of moderate temper might live with ſome credit in the country, and not be obliged to abandon their houſes, for fear of ill company; more honourable diverſions might be encouraged, and no neceſſity of becoming ſots, to make themſelves fit company for neighbours and gentlemen; religion and morality might by degrees be promoted, and ſome diſpoſitions laid for being filled with the Holy Ghoſt: For truly till this vice be reformed, there can be no habitation for this divine gueſt. Do thou, then, O powerful Mover, inſpire ſome Chriſtian breaſts with theſe generous thoughts of ſtanding againſt the torrent; that ſo Chriſtianity, which could never be worſted by perſecution, may not now ſhamefully be drunk out of doors.

Twentieth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

John iv. 46. Ends verſe 53.

HEARING *that* Jeſus *was come from* Judea *into* Galilee, *he went to him, and aſked him to go down, and heal his ſon.* This whole Goſpel is the relation of a miracle, wrought by Chriſt, upon the ſon of this ruler, who made this petition to him. The ſickneſs of his ſon was that which carried him to Chriſt; and thus, that which he lamented as his misfortune at home, was the firſt ſtep to his happineſs. The peaceable enjoyment of what we love, is the general wiſh of all; and meaſuring happineſs by the maxims of ſelf-love and the world, we then think all goes well, when the ſucceſs anſwers our wiſhes. But our blindneſs and corruption being ſuch, that we generally abuſe preſent bleſſings, and in our enjoyments lay the ſeeds of eternal miſery, either by the forgetfulneſs of God, and the life to come, or by making them the ſubject of criminal

exceſſes: This often obliges God, if he has yet mercy left for us, to interrupt our preſent peace, and by what we call afflictions, put us in the way of preventing our being eternally miſerable.

This is the deſign of Providence, in mixing the ſweets of this life with bitterneſs; that the Chriſtian ſoul, being taught by diſappointments, may raiſe up his deſires towards a more laſting happineſs; and by the uncertainties of changeable goods, learn to ſeek for a ſtate which is unchangeable. The example, then, of this ruler going to Chriſt, when he ſaw his ſon now at the point of death, ought to be an inſtruction to Chriſtians, to make a like uſe of all afflictions. His ſick ſon carried him to Chriſt; their afflictions ought to carry them to the ſame refuge. Then it is, inſtead of yielding to any ſullen or complaining paſſion, they ought to conclude all worldly ſatisfactions to be vain; condemn their paſt folly, in building upon a foundation that could not bear; reſolve upon preventing the like miſcarriage, by the diſcretion of a more moderate ſpirit; and at preſent ſeek comfort there, where there is no danger of the like uncertainty. By this way, all misfortunes and preſent uneaſineſs would lead to

an eternal good, and heaven would be the fruit of unhappineſs.

And how happy would Chriſtians be, if they could come to the practice of this leſſon! And how unwiſe, if they do not daily ſtudy it! Misfortunes come frequent in this life, to thoſe who are beſt fenced againſt them; others meet them oftener, ſome live amongſt them, and none can pretend to an exemption. And muſt it not then be a notorious indiſcretion in them, not to learn the practice of that which comes ſo often in their way: Which, if once learnt, might be ſo much for their preſent eaſe, and eternal advantage; and the want of it muſt be the certain increaſe of preſent miſery, and put them in hazard of that which is everlaſting? Is not this a parallel folly to theirs, who being in want of bread, and all neceſſaries, and having a certain coin in their poſſeſſion, which might abundantly ſupply them in their preſent neceſſities, and ſecure them againſt future poverty, ſhould go on ſmarting under their wants, and loſe all the benefit of what they have in their hands, becauſe they will not be ſo induſtrious, as to know the value of what they have, and enquire how to put it off? The caſe is the ſame, and too plain for Chriſtians to conſider, without reproach and confuſion.

What therefore are they to do? They are to consider every trouble, of whatever kind it be, as a monitor or messenger which bids them go to Christ; first, to seek his help, as this ruler did, pressing their petition to him with an earnestness like his; and with such perseverance, as, again like him, not to be discouraged if they seem to be rejected, and in the continuance of the evil see nothing but motives of despair; because prayer and faith in such dejecting circumstances must powerfully prevail with God for their relief.

But their principal way of then going to Christ, ought to be in the endeavours of coming near him in the resemblance of his spirit and life. He, who had all things in his power, made choice of the cross, and his life was a preparation to it, in all manner of sufferings, contempts, and humiliations; and since it is the honour of a disciple to follow the steps of his master, it ought to be their endeavours, when God puts them in the circumstances, to be contented, and even pleased, that they are in the state of their master; that is, in a state of suffering, in a state which separates them from the enjoyments of life, and renders them miserable and contemptible in regard of this world.

This

This diſpoſition they ought to ſtrengthen in their hearts, by the conſideration, that God being infinite in his eſſential perfections, and likewiſe in the bleſſings beſtowed on them, all honour, praiſe, adoration, and happineſs, are due to him alone; but that they being nothing but imperfection, corruption, and miſery; that they have committed infinite offences, and are ſtill expoſed to as many more, if not prevented by grace; what can be due to them, but only to be made the ſcorn of men, to ſuffer affronts, diſgraces, diſtempers of mind and body, darkneſs, oppreſſions; to be afflicted and perſecuted by all creatures, as executioners of the divine juſtice? This is what they muſt acknowledge their due; and muſt not then the love of juſtice ſo far prevail upon all natural inclinations, as to oblige them to ſubmit to the execution of it, and even to make them rejoice in the occaſions of being brought to the lively ſenſe of their miſery, and of being more humble and abject in their own eyes?

Whilſt therefore it muſt be acknowledged an effect of impatience and pride, immoderately to grieve or complain under troubles, a more peaceable ſubmiſſion muſt be the fruit of an humble ſpirit; ſuch as ſenſible of its own unworthineſs, is willing

to make a ſacrifice of all to God, and is therefore pleaſed in the opportunity of doing it. And this being the ſpirit which approaches towards that of Chriſt, it is in this manner, when troubles afflict, Chriſtians ought to uſe their beſt endeavours to come as near him as they can.

If they find a difficulty in it, as it muſt neceſſarily be to corrupt nature, let them conſider it as an unhappy infirmity, which ſtands in need of Chriſt's help, and therefore go to him in behalf of themſelves, and ſolicit for their cure. Let it be one part of their daily prayers to beg of God a patient and humble ſpirit, that they may bear all troubles in the ſpirit of Chriſt. And if any preſent dejection makes them ſuſpect all their prayers as fruitleſs, and that God will not hear them, let them look on this ruler, and take courage from the mercy ſhewed to him. He made his addreſs, it is true, to Chriſt, but with how great imperfections; whilſt he preſſes for the health of his ſon, and is not concerned for his ſoul; while he demands a miracle for his cure, has a falſe idea of the Omnipotence of God, and is yet weak in faith? And yet with theſe imperfections, Chriſt favours his petition, and not only heals his ſon, as he was aſked, but adds to this a

much greater mercy, in giving the life of faith to him and his whole family.

May not chriſtians hence learn to raiſe their hopes above what they ſee in themſelves, by grounding their confidence on the infinite goodneſs of God, who knows how to give, not only more than we aſk, but likewiſe beyond all we can poſſibly deſerve? Could we pray without imperfections, it would be a great temptation to pride, and to confide too much in ourſelves: But as it is, having done our beſt, we have nothing wherein to truſt, but in God alone, and that is where it ſhould be. And ſince we ſee our imperfections do not obſtruct his mercies; though we are always bound to lament our weakneſſes, and ſincerely labour to overcome them, yet they ought to be no motive to us of deſpair, ſince our hope ought not to be proportioned to what is in us, but to what is in God. Upon this foundation are chriſtians to perſevere in prayer, even when the diſcouraging ſuggeſtions of a melancholy or dejected ſpirit tells them, that God will not hear; and to practiſe the leſſon of *Abraham*'s faith, by hoping even againſt hope; that is, when darkneſs lets them ſee no grounds of hope; and this is the hope of faith. Thus, O God, has thy mercy

taught us to reſt with confidence in Thee. May this confidence, O Jeſus, ſupport me under all afflictions, that when theſe hang with a heavy weight upon my ſpirit, I may ſtill find comfort in Thee. May I then ſeek and run to Thee with moſt earneſtneſs, when I want Thee moſt: And though I know myſelf many ways imperfect, yet permit me not, I beſeech Thee, to indulge my imperfections, nor live in thy diſpleaſure by wilful ſin, and then nothing ſhall deſtroy that hope I ought to have in Thee.

Twenty-firſt Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Epheſians vi. 10. Ends verſe 17.

PUT *on the armour of God, that you may be able to ſtand againſt the ſnares of the Devil.* A chriſtian's life, is a combat, not to end but with death; a combat not only with fleſh and blood, but with devils, whoſe nature is ſpiritual, whoſe number is prodigious, whoſe power is terrible, whoſe kingdom is of a great extent, whoſe artifices are ſubtil, whoſe malice is conſummate, who make their attempts at all times, in all places, and in all manners; ſo that no retirement or walls, which ſhut out the world, can be a ſecurity againſt their ſnares. There is no ſhelter but in God alone; and yet ſo, that even they who fly under the ſhadow of his wings, ſhall not be privileged from variety of aſſaults; but however, putting on his armour is the only means of being victorious over theſe infernal enemies.

Such chriſtians therefore as neglect their duties to God, pray but ſeldom, and even then give up their minds to all diſtracting trifles that occur, muſt not wonder if they often experience the devil's malice in ſinful ſuggeſtions, and their own weakneſs in yielding to them: For though God has promiſed to help thoſe who are in diſtreſs, yet it is promiſed to ſuch only as call upon him. Though there is an aſſurance given, that he will not permit us to be tempted above our ſtrength; yet this regards thoſe only, who are faithful in his ſervice, and with earneſtneſs ſolicit heaven for aſſiſtance, whereby they may be prepared againſt all attempts. If then there be a neglect of God, a life careleſs and tepid, bent on eaſe and pleaſure, and little ſenſible of their own infirmity, and the neceſſary dependence they have on the divine ſuccours, what wonder if ſuch become a prey to the enemy, and are made a part of his triumphs? It muſt be imputed to their own negligence that they meet with trials above their ſtrength, and are ſo often overcome, ſince they ſeek not to put on the armour of God, which is their only defence.

There muſt be a lively faith too, which is to ſerve them as a buckler; a faith of

thoſe eternal goods of the next life, The expectation of theſe, is to raiſe their hearts to a contempt of all the paſſing flatteries of concupiſcence, and ſupport them under the weight of evils. He that firmly believes an everlaſting happineſs to come, will be ever willing to ſuffer ſomething for it: He will chearfully abandon what delights here; and think it no ill exchange, when he reflects, that the eternal poſſeſſion of God is to be the recompence of ſuch ſelf-denials. We daily ſee what wonderful effects the proſpect of worldly intereſt or reſt produces; with what patience men go through great hardſhips, how eaſily they deny themſelves, even their moſt favourite pleaſures, and ſtand untired againſt repeated injuries and provocations, when they have but ſome temporal advantage in their eye. The ſame are the effects of a vigorous and active faith; the Glory of the bleſſed ſo much eclipſes all the greatneſs of whatever is valuable or delightful here below, that the privation of it ſeems not conſiderable; and ordinary ſufferings and ſelf-denials are a very eaſy purchaſe of ſo laſting a bleſſing. Thus faith ſerves for a buckler, and covering the ſoul, defends it againſt all the devil

makes uſe of here, that is either charming or terrifying.

But the word of God is to be the ſword or offenſive weapon, by which the enemy is to be put to flight. Chriſt in three aſſaults repulſed the devil with three paſſages of holy writ, for our example. This is the ſacred expedient, by which God eſtabliſhes his kingdom in our ſouls, and overthrows the devil's. Happy then is that ſoul, that in time of temptation ſtands thus armed, and when the enemy makes his attempts, can meet him thus provided: *My help is from our Lord. Let my God ariſe, and his enemies be put to flight. O God, incline unto my aid: O Lord make haſte to help me. Thou art my helper in tribulation; protect me under the ſhadow of thy wings. Our Lord is my light and my ſalvation, whom ſhall I fear? Our Lord is the protector of my life, who ſhall make me tremble? If whole armies ſtand againſt me, my heart ſhall not fear. How long, Lord, doſt thou forget me? How long ſhall the enemy be exalted againſt me? Have regard to me and hear me, my God, enlighten my eyes that I ſleep not in death, that my enemy may never ſay, I have prevailed againſt him. Ariſe, to my help, O*

Lord, and ſay to my ſoul, I am thy ſalvation, &c.

Thus the chriſtian is to ſecure himſelf, by putting on the armour of God, and if he be ever thus prepared, let him not fear: For if the devil's malice ſeems endleſs and untired, his courage is to be ſo too; and what then can hurt him? He is not to be diſcouraged on this ſcore, but perſevere to the end, in hopes of a crown. Dejection of ſpirit, and the anxiety of a diſquieted mind, is not the leaſt temptation; and therefore as ſtoutly to be reſiſted, as any other of a fouler aſpect. Whom the devil cannot overcome by force, he endeavours to tire out by importunity: If he cannot prevail for the breaking the commandments, he is content to diſturb the keeping them. But the providence of God has a deſign of mercy in the permiſſion of this laſting war; he knows, that frequent trials are the exerciſe of virtue, that the mind is awakened and rendered more active by oppoſition, that by dangers it is made ſenſible of its own weakneſs, and that total dependence it has on God, is kept in a perp tual ſtate of humility, and puſhed on to ſeek help from above. Were it not for this neceſſity of divine ſuccours, it would fall, by the

weight of corrupt nature, into the moſt dangerous of all temptations, that is, of performing all the actions of piety without any interior feeling, with tepidity and indifferency: This is but too often the ill effect of peace: Chriſtians, like ſeamen, being too apt to ſleep in a calm, when a ſtorm makes them watchful and laborious.

Let not then the pious ſoul be diſcouraged under the ſevereſt trials; God has ſo ordered it for his eternal good: It is his duty to go on under the appointments of heaven: His care, indeed, ought to be, to avoid all occaſions, and never voluntarily expoſe himſelf to danger; in this caſe he has reaſon to fear, that God may leave him to himſelf, in puniſhment of his raſhneſs, or his neglect; for though Chriſt ſtretched forth his hand to *Peter* walking on the water, in reward of his zeal, and his faith; yet negligence or preſumption can never expect this privilege of the divine aſſiſtance, when, by theſe, men are blindly carried on to walk upon precipices. But, in all other caſes, let courage and a confidence in God keep up the chriſtian's heart. Chriſt himſelf was tempted for our inſtruction, and to inform us, that no degree of holineſs is ſecure. The

bleſſed in heaven have paſſed through great temptations, and by theſe their fidelity has been tried like gold in the fire. If thou art tried too, remember to be faithful, put on the armour of God, and ſtand it out; run to Chriſt like the Apoſtles in the ſtorm; and if he ſeems not to hear, it is only to add ſtill greater fervour to thy prayers. *Si moram fecerit, expecta illum, quia veniens veniet & non tardabit.* Call on him, and deſpair not; for none ſhall be confounded that put their truſt in him. It is an uneaſy life to a ſoul that ſeeks God, to be diſturbed with endleſs temptations: But it is an uneaſineſs more to ſelf-love, which deſires quiet, than to the love of God, which is content in being exerciſed. It is the next, and not this, is the life of reſt: Here thou art to fight and overcome, that thou mayeſt be crowned hereafter Fight on then, that at the laſt hour thou mayeſt have the comfort of ſaying with St. *Paul*, *Bonum certamen certavi.* I have fought a good fight, and there is laid up for me a crown of juſtice.

Twenty-first Sunday after Pentecost.

GOSPEL.

Matt. xviii. 23. To the end.

ONE was brought to him, that owed him ten thousand talents. In the person of the servant, mentioned in this parable, thus deeply indebted to his king, are represented to us, not only great and scandalous sinners, but all men in general; so that there is no person who ought not to acknowledge himself, thus standing charged with infinite debts in regard of God. For the end of the parable being to make all sensible of the obligation they have, of remitting or pardoning whatever others are indebted to them; and this being general, the reason here brought by Christ for pressing them to it, must be understood so too: That is, that if God would treat us according to the rigour of his justice, he has a right of charging us with infinite faults. And that this sentiment may be sincere, it cannot be unseasonable, on this

day, to make reflection on ſome general heads, which may convince chriſtians of the number of their ſins, or rather ſhew them to be without number.

Firſt then, For example, how many are the ſins of every one in particular, in their time ſpent unprofitably; whilſt that, which was granted by God, for working out their ſalvation, has been prodigally waſted in vain amuſements, which, if no otherwiſe evil, have diverted the mind, at leaſt from better thoughts; ſince the more it is buſied in what is vain, the leſs ſolicitous it is in what is neceſſary?

Secondly, How many are the ſins, by letting paſſion have the influence in what they do, and not reaſon; in acting for themſelves, without referring what they do to God; or being carried on by the motive of ſome private intereſt, and not of juſtice?

Thirdly, How many, in vain, indiſcreet, and unprofitable words, ſeeking to pleaſe men, to gain their eſteem, or to leſſen others, and this how often under the cover of pretended piety or charity?

Fourthly, how many, in ſecret ſcandals given to their neighbour, by imprinting in his mind the image of their paſſions, and falſe judgments; and by car-

rying on diſcourſes before him, not proportioned to his circuſtances, but weakening his ſoul, and diſpoſing it to ſin?

Fifthly, How many, by the omiſſion of many opportunities of advancing in virtue, and doing good to their neighbour; and this occaſioned by ſloth, neglect, affection, or ſome other paſſion, which over-rules in ſuch caſes?

Sixthly, How many, by ingratitude under the daily bleſſings of God, whilſt they acknowledge his mercies no more than if they were their due?

Seventhly, How many, by the neglects, irreverence and diſtractions, mixed with their prayers, ariſing from their paſſions not ſubdued?

Eighthly, How many, by abuſing the grace of God, his ſacraments, his truths, and inſtructions, which he gives them in a thouſand different ways?

Ninthly, How many, by the ill uſe of the chaſtiſements God ſends them, when, inſtead of diſcharging the old debts, as they ought, they contract new ones by their impatience?

Laſtly, How many, even in the good actions they do, by the human reſpects beginning and carrying them on, and by the pride, too often following, accompa-

nied with the contempt of others? And if there be reaſon to be apprehenſive, on the account of what is eſteemed virtue, how much more is there to fear upon the the account of the evil, to which all are ſubject?

This then being the confeſſed ſtate of all chriſtians, what muſt they do under this weighty charge, but have recourſe to the patience of God? *Patientiam habe*: And caſting themſelves wholly upon his goodneſs, ſo hope to move him to mercy: This ſenſe of their poverty, accompanied with proportioned humility, being moſt powerful for this end; and the beſt expedient to find comfort under the weight of their ſins.

But are we not to add to this petition, the promiſe made by his ſervant, *Have patience and I will pay thee all?* It is certain ſinners ought to claim no right to the grace of God, but depend wholly on the pure mercy of God: But at the ſame time, they are to have a ſincere deſire of ſatisfying the juſtice of God offended, by works of penance, which they ought to reſolve to do all their lives. This deſire, and this will, has nothing of preſumption, becauſe it places no other value in ſuch works, but what they have from their

union with the merits of Jeſus Chriſt. They are to deſire therefore to make ſatisfaction to God; not in pretending to offer him a price ſufficient of itſelf, and as ſeparate from the merits of Jeſus Chriſt for the diſcharge of their debt; but in obſerving the law, which they know God has eſtabliſhed; *to wit*, that all ſins are to be puniſhed by the juſtice, either of God, or of the penitent ſinner. It is true the greateſt penances a ſinner can undertake, are not in the leaſt capable, by themſelves, of cancelling ſin, but only through the merits of Jeſus Chriſt; but Jeſus Chriſt applies the price of his blood, only to thoſe who are in a diſpoſition of doing ſerious penance; *Niſi penitentiam egeritis omnes ſimiliter peribitis: If you do not penance, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* This is a means ordained by God, for partaking of the blood of Jeſus Chriſt, and for obtaining of him the remiſſion of ſins. There can be no preſumption then in ſubmitting to this law; but it muſt be a great one to diſpenſe with it; ſince it is making void, in a great part, the end of Chriſt's paſſion; who, as St. *Paul* ſays, ſuffered for us, leaving us an example, that we may follow his ſteps; and who can juſtify the not following them, or plead for an

exemption, but by ſetting up againſt him, in what he has propoſed, ordained, and commanded?

In practiſing therefore this penance thus required for the payment of their debts, chriſtians do no leſs depend on their only ſupport, the mercy of God; becauſe they have no hope of grace for performing ſuch penance, but from the divine mercy; God diſpenſes not with their payment; but gives them wherewith to pay; and hence the will of not paying is eſſentially contrary to the remiſſion of ſins: Upon which grounds it is, the church has declared *ſatisfaction* to be one part of the ſacrament of penance. The occaſion therefore of the oppoſition ſome make againſt this doctrine, is, becauſe they do not diſtinguiſh penitential works, from the price and value of ſuch works. They imagine, God demands not the fruits of penance, becauſe their is nothing but the merits of Chriſt, which has proportion to the greatneſs of our ſins; but do not conſider, that though in effect, the pardon of ſin is not obtained, but by the blood of Chriſt, and the ſole graces of God, yet theſe merits and graces are applied to men by certain means, which are enlivened by grace, and have their whole

price and value from the merits of Chriſt. We acknowledge, with them, that Chriſt's blood makes entire ſatisfaction to the juſtice of God: But it is our buſineſs ſtill, by works of charity and penance, to have this in particular applied to us. What, therefore, we are to fear, is not, that we ſhall not have wherewith to pay our debts, but rather, that we ſhall neglect the opportunities of doing it, which God puts into our hands; as we ſee in the ſervant here mentioned, refuſing to releaſe the inconſiderable debt which his companion owed him.

In which paſſage is plainly demonſtrated, that the mercy of God, and infinite merits of Chriſt's paſſion, will avail us nothing, except we, by a charitable condeſcendence forgive every one our neighbour, whatever offences he has committed againſt us; and what is required is not only to forgive him in words, or in appearance, but ſincerely from our hearts. This being a condition ſo expreſly required by Chriſt for obtaining pardon of our ſins, is it not our common intereſt, to ſee that we find no pretexts for diſpenſing with it; that ſo, when we come to appear before our Lord, we may not have the terror of our whole debt, which we ſuppoſed for-

given, ſtanding in full againſt us? Let thoſe then conſider it, who ſay, they cannot forgive ſuch injuries and provocations. And thoſe too, who ſay, they have forgiven, and yet cannot ſpeak peaceably to the parties concerned, ſpeak ever peeviſhly of them, put the worſt conſtruction on all that belongs to them, are pleaſed in the ill opinion others have of them, and in all that happens to make them uneaſy: Theſe are ill ſymptoms, enough to ſuſpect, that gall and bitterneſs ſtill lie at the heart. And have not they then reaſon to give no reſt to themſelves, till they have brought all into a more ſettled and ſincere peace; ſince they have here the aſſurance, that if they forgive not their neighbours from their hearts, they muſt expect no peace with God? Thus, O Jeſus, thou haſt taught us, and ſince we cannot doubt of the truth, grant we may have ſuch a ſenſe of the multitude of our own ſins, and of the mercy we want, as to be ſolicitous in obtaining it; and that we may never be ſo perverſly blind, as to exclude ourſelves from the mercy thou offereſt, by being unmerciful to our brethren, and turning away thy pardon from us, by refuſing to pardon them.

Twenty-ſecond Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Philip. i. 6. Ends verſe 11.

THIS I pray for, that your charity may more and more abound in knowledge and in all underſtanding, that you may approve the better things. Thoſe chriſtians, who apprehend how great difficulty there is in approving and chuſing what is beſt, and to how many miſcarriages ſuch a choice is expoſed, eaſily underſtand the apoſtle's zeal for the *Philippians*, in making this prayer for them, that their charity may ſtill increaſe in all knowledge for the diſcerning that which is beſt. For truly, if Almighty God gives not a bleſſing for the increaſe of knowledge rooted in charity, it will be very eaſy to miſtake the choice of what is good. If the heart of man, inſtead of being animated with charity, be corrupted with paſſion, the light of reaſon, juſtice and truth is not ſufficient to direct it; for paſſion ſo obſcures, if

not wholly darkens this light, that it violently puſhes on the ſoul to make uſe of all its natural abilities, to the perverting or invalidating the ſtrongeſt and moſt evident motives to all good: it cauſes a certain blindneſs in the heart, ſo much more unfortunate than that of the body, that it makes a man in love with his darkneſs, and deſire to abide in it; it makes him hate the light, and be afraid of ſeeing it; ſets him againſt all the charitable offers of direction, ſo as with inſolence to oppoſe thoſe who would hinder him from thoſe precipices which are before him; and has thoſe very ſymptoms of madneſs, as to think all thoſe blind, who are not like himſelf.

The prodigious effects of this we ſee in the Phariſees, upon whom, thus prepoſſeſſed, all the evidence of Chriſt's miracles worked nothing, to the opening their eyes; but only put them upon making wrong conſtructions of every thing he did, and finding out expedients to defend themſelves and others againſt the force of his light; and being thus raſhly carried on by paſſion, inſtead of being moved by charity, they were ſo far from chuſing what was beſt, that they ran

headlong into an abyſs of error and wickedneſs.

This is what ought to be a terror to all chriſtians; and yet there are ſtill other degrees of it, though much inferior to this, with great ſolicitude to be avoided by them. For it is not only the malicious paſſion of the *Jews* that is an obſtruction in the choice of good; but every degree of it, every affection of the mind, that is not rooted in charity, is generally attended with the ſame ill conſequence, and ought to make chriſtians very apprehenſive in the choice they make; leſt being influenced by ſome diſorder of the heart, they be led out of the way to ſomething that is unjuſt or unreaſonable. *Education* and *Cuſtom* itſelf is enough to cauſe this darkneſs, and indiſpoſe the ſoul for the diſcerning what is right and juſt: But, as for *intereſt*, *favour*, *diſlike*, *ambition*, *covetouſneſs*, *ſelf-love*, &c. the ill effects of theſe are wonderful in this kind; and it is ſtrange to conſider, what a thick cloud theſe caſt upon reaſon, and totally hinder it in the approbation and choice of what is right: So that if a chriſtian be not mindful in joining with St. *Paul*, to petition of God a *large increaſe of charity, in knowledge and all underſtanding*, he is

in evident danger of being miſ-led by theſe falſe lights, to the choice of what is contrary to his greateſt intereſt, and is rather the effect of ſome paſſion, than of his reaſon.

Hence the ordinary method of chriſtians is much to be lamented, who in the choice of what is moſt important to them, are ſo little concerned in taking God's help along with them; but generally put themſelves under the conduct of ſome paſſion for their direction: And ſo, for the diſcerning more clearly in the choice they make, moſt abſurdly begin, in chuſing darkneſs rather than light. It is thus in that choice, which is made for life; when a married ſtate is reſolved on, and ſo much depends on the choice of the perſon, that not only the temporal but eternal comfort is evidently hazarded, if this be ill made; one would think, none would ever venture on this, without having firſt earneſtly ſolicited heaven for its aſſiſtance, and direction in this caſe: And yet how contrary is the practice; when many times there is nothing more than the violence of a ſudden paſſion, raiſed from ſome external agreeableneſs, which determines the point, without any knowledge of more ſolid qualifications,

neceſſary for diſcharging the duties of that ſtate? And if more time be taken by others to deliberate on the caſe, it is ſeldom with the knowledge of charity, which is alone capable of directing for the beſt; but generally moſt ſordid and vain principles have the powerful influence, and preſide in the choice. The enquiry is about money, dignity and place; if theſe anſwer expectation, the buſineſs goes on; and as for the chriſtian dowry of piety, moderation, virtue, patience and peace; this is either diſpenſed with, or a very general account ſerves the turn? So that if the temporal circumſtances do but ſatisfy, the eternal are put to the venture. And it is moſt unaccountable, into what perplexing inconveniencies many caſt themſelves by this raſhneſs; on the proſpect of ſome inviting bait, either of money or honour, ſacrificing all their reſt, comfort, and conſcience, by tying themſelves to ſuch perſons, whoſe known irregularity, prodigality, and vice, cuts off all hopes of thoſe more deſirable goods. But how can it be otherwiſe, when in an affair of this conſequence, they have no other guidance but of ſome brutiſh and vain paſſion; they firſt blind themſelves, and then go on in a way, where none can go ſafely,

ſafely, but who have God to direct them? And this, I queſtion not, is the true ground of ſo many unhappy marriages, of ſuch diſorders in families, of children neglected, or barbarouſly educated, and of eſtates waſted.

The ſame ill method is too much practiſed by parents in diſpoſing of their children, and by children in regard of the ſtate of life which they chuſe. The only thing conſidered is *profit* and *honour;* where there appears the moſt promiſing hopes of theſe, there is no need of farther conſideration; the buſineſs is concluded, though the principal point is yet unthought on, which is, how far each ſtate is proper for them in a Chriſtian way, and moſt conſiſtent with their ſalvation? But this is generally neglected: And hence it is, that ſo many are promoted to church dignities, and to the ſtate of religion, with no other call but that of intereſt, honour, or conveniency; and taking ſuch burthens on them, which they are unfit to bear, they ſink under them into moſt ſcandalous liberties or neglects; and I wiſh it prove not in the end, that by their own or their parents raſhneſs, they have choſen their own damnation. Hence again it is, that on worldly proſpects only, without any regard to an eternal well-being, other ſtates and employments are ſought for

and made choice of, which are evidently dangerous, if not wholly inconſiſtent with future happineſs. There are but too many of theſe, ſo very corrupt in themſelves, expoſed to ſuch variety of frauds and injuſtices to make them turn to account, that they are nothing better than ſnares to the undertakers; and there can be no other reaſon of ſo many running into them, but this fundamental neglect of not chuſing according to the knowledge of charity. It is the ſame in chuſing of maſters and ſervices, and almoſt every thing we reſolve on. It is humour, paſſion, intereſt, ſelf-love, &c. that determine the choice, and, I fear, command too much in all we do. And, O God, to how many miſcarriages, both eternal and temporal, are we expoſed, by putting ourſelves under the conduct of ſuch blind guides, and neglecting thee, by whoſe bleſſing alone we are to ſucceed in all we undertake? Help us in this our miſery, in making us more ſolicitous for our everlaſting happineſs; and let our charity ſo abound more and more in all knowledge, that in whatever we determine, we may above all things have our principal regard to thee, and ſo ever be in a way of approving what is beſt.

Twenty-ſecond Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. xxii. 15. Ends verſe 21.

GIVE *to God the things that are God's.* They are the words of Chriſt in anſwer to the Phariſees, who, deſigning to ſurpriſe him, by rendering him odious, either to the prince or to the people, are ſilenced in the diſappointment of their malice, (and ſent away with this fundamental principle, by which they are reproached of their wickedneſs) and in particular of the method, at this time undertaken, for effecting what they purpoſed. For if what belongs to God is to be rendered to him, what judgment muſt they make of themſelves, who being men of parts and learning, employed not theſe gifts in the ſervice of God, the giver by ſeeking truth, and giving it authority amongſt the ignorant; but by contriving ways to oppoſe it, being induſtrious by falſe conſtructions to render it leſs diſcernible, and here ſummoning all their craft to undermine him, who came to teach it for the ſalvation of men?

Obſerve but their addreſs to Chriſt: *Maſter*, ſay they, *we know thou art true, and teacheſt the way of God in truth; thou haſt no regard to any one, nor conſidereſt the perſons of men.* Nothing could be more artificially laid for gaining their end than theſe pretended applauſes, which are ever moſt effectual for giving a more than uſual confidence, and drawing from perſons, thus raiſed up in their own opinion, raſh or indiſcreet truths; and though the infinite wiſdom they attacked was not thus to be brought into a ſnare, yet the principle he advanced might have made them ſenſible of their injuſtice, in thus proſtituting their beſt abilities to the ſervice of their paſſion; which being the effect of God's goodneſs to them, ought to have been rendered again to him in the fruits of piety, charity, and juſtice.

In this way then were the Phariſees condemned, for not rendering to God the things that are God's, and I wiſh they had the encloſure of this guilt; but there are grounds to ſuſpect it of a larger extent, ſince to abuſe the accompliſhments of nature, and bleſſings of induſtry, by promoting an intereſt contrary to God, who is the author of them, is ſo common amongſt profeſſed Chriſtians, that they ſeem not at all concerned in this principle of juſtice, of giving to God what belongs to him.

As for the very fact of the Phariſees, it has been tranſmitted down to our days by the like practice of evil Chriſtians, who in all ages have endeavoured not only to eclipſe the truth, but by all the contrivances of art and ſtudy, have laboured to make it odious, and prevent its being diſcovered by ſuch, whoſe ſincerity has put them upon ſeeking it. And what plea have they had to juſtify their proceedings, but ſuch as carried on the Phariſees; their not ſeeing the truth? But what put the blind on their eyes, but only permitting their judgments to be corrupted by paſſion, intereſt, and ambition; and turning all that induſtry to the finding ways to obſcure it, which ſhould have been employed in ſeeking it? Learning is a great help, when it has charity and ſincerity for its guides; but if theſe are laid by, it only ſerves to make more ſkilful artiſts againſt truth, and to undertake the management of this great injuſtice, the robbing God of what belongs to him.

This ſame injuſtice is practiſed in a more offenſive way by thoſe whoſe education and natural abilities give them many advantages over their neighbours; and the general ſubject in which they exerciſe them in public, is either in ridiculing all religion, or in advancing arguments of reaſon ſo far, as to

expoſe all thoſe myſteries which are not the conſequence of ſuch principles. And where impiety is ſomething more modeſt, though ſuch perſons ſpare the fundamentals, yet how often do they exerciſe their wits in railleries againſt all thoſe whoſe exemplary piety is a reproach to their ſcandalous liberties, and in their jeering attacks againſt the ſtricter profeſſors of a Goſpel life? And of thoſe who are not bold enough for this, are there not ſtill many who abuſe the words of life, in making the holy ſcripture the ſubject of their jeſts; and give their prophane turns to this, when it is to ſet forth their own wit, or entertain their company? Now, how far is this from giving to God what is his; when thoſe gifts, with which he has bleſſed all theſe, are no ways returned to him, but made the unhappy occaſions of more plauſibly offending him.

Many others follow after theſe, though at ſome diſtance, who ſhew their wit in expoſing their neighbours actions, their overſights and indiſcretions; in painting out their own worldly paſſions in ſuch charming colours, as to gain admirers, and invite to imitation; in applauding their neighbours weakneſſes, and by hurtful flatteries, encouraging ſuch methods of raſhneſs, prodigality, vanity, and folly, which in their con-

ſcience they diſapprove, and charity obliges them to condemn; in ſtudied or affected ways of magnifying themſelves, and drawing all ſubjects to their own commendation. Infinite other methods there are of this kind, by which Chriſtians abuſe the beſt gifts of God; and inſtead of referring them to him, by making them ſerviceable to his glory, to the cauſe of virtue, to their own or neighbours ſpiritual good, turn them all againſt him, in ſetting up an intereſt contrary to what they profeſs in being followers of the Goſpel, and to all they have undertaken at the font, when they were liſted amongſt the adopted children of God.

This hitherto touches only thoſe who have not the buſineſs of the world upon them; but if we turn towards them who are under theſe engagements, the ſame charge, I fear, will be generally found ſtanding in force againſt them. For if we obſerve men of buſineſs, who have any advantage above their neighbours, either in health, ſtrength, capacity of parts, what is the uſe they make of theſe gifts? I wiſh I could ſay with truth, that by the help of theſe they are better advocates of juſtice and truth; are more exemplary in virtue; are more zealous in reforming public injuſtice and ſcandals; are more induſtrious in pro-

moting what is for the good of church or ſtate; but this is rather with than fact; for beſides ſome few, who are diſtinguiſhed by theſe particular characters, it is but too evident, the greateſt numbers turn theſe bleſſings quite another way; that is, bend all their natural abilities, either to raiſe themſelves higher in this world; to gain riches and places of command; to contrive ways for impoſing on and over-reaching their neighbour; to be more artificial deceivers, more ingenious cheats; to exempt themſelves from public ſervice; to oppreſs the poor with more ſecurity; to make advantage of others misfortunes; and, laſt of all, to be provided with ſufficient means for living an idle, vain, and extravagant life.

This is the general method of worldly men, this is the employment of whatever talents God has entruſted in their hands; ſo that, inſtead of employing them in the ſervice of God and eternity, they have confined their trade wholly to this world; and this ſome do ſo remarkably, as even to be ſtupidly ignorant as to all things belonging to God and their ſouls, whilſt in buſineſs of their private intereſt, they have cunning enough to manage againſt the wiſeſt, without any danger of being worſted; and others again are remarkable in another way,

whilſt they not only ſeek this world, but even make uſe of that ſincerity and candour of temper, which God has given them, for gaining credit to their knavery; which others ſtill carry farther, in counterfeiting piety and conſcience, that, under this cover, they may deceive without ſuſpicion.

In theſe ſeveral ways Chriſtians join with the Phariſees in robbing God of his due, and not rendering to God the things that are God's. And beſide theſe, if other Chriſtians, who may preſume themſelves here not concerned, would look into their accounts, and ſee what is the uſe of all they have received, of time, health, eſtate; of natural abilities, and acquired accompliſhments; with all the opportunities of doing good, which God puts into their hands; I cannot but think they will diſcover ſo much waſte and injuſtice in the abuſe of ſuch bleſſings, that when they ſhall be called to an account, and all is to be ſtated by this principle, of rendering to God the things that are God's, they will have reaſon to ſuſpect the deciſion of their eternal lot. O God, I confeſs I have reaſon to fear this, when I look back upon my paſt years; and therefore will not think of juſtifying myſelf, but only of ſeeking my defence in thy mercy: Pardon me therefore, I beſeech thee,

all my paſt injuſtices, and forgive me all my iniquities; and now, from this time, give me grace to conſider all thy gifts; not how I may make an advantage of them as to this world, but to the purpoſes for which thou haſt given them, and the uſe thou expecteſt from me. This grace, O God, is the greateſt comfort I deſire here; and it is this only can give me comfort at my laſt hour, when thou ſhalt ſummon me to render the account of all that I have received.

[*When there are only three-and-twenty Sundays after* Pentecoſt, *the inſtructions upon the Epiſtle and Goſpel of the following Sunday are to be omitted, and thoſe of the four-and-twentieth Sunday to be read in their ſtead.*]

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Phil. iii. 17. Ends iv. 3.

BE *followers of me.* The advice is ſhort, but ſuch as ſpeaks at length the excellencies of this great apoſtle, whoſe life was ſuch an exact copy of the Goſpel, that requiring the *Philippians* to follow him, was a full exhortation to them of following the Goſpel. To follow him, was to love Jeſus above all things; to know nothing but Jeſus, and him crucified; to eſteem all things, beſide Jeſus, as nothing; to deſire to forſake all things, and ſuffer all things for the love of Jeſus; to deſire to be with Jeſus; to ſigh and long to be united to him; to be willing to undertake all hardſhips, to expoſe himſelf to perſecution, torments, and death for his neighbour's good; to rejoice in tribulation; to be crucified and dead to the world; to embrace its troubles, and renounce its pleaſures; in fine, to be followers of St *Paul*, was to be followers of Jeſus, and his true diſciples. Goo advice

to the *Philippians* in a few words; and happy they, if they were ſolicitous to follow it. But is it not an exhortation, or rather a command to all paſtors, to be ſo exact in all the diſcipline of their lives, that without danger to their flock, they may every one ſay to thoſe under their charge, *Be followers of me.* As many as ſucceed St *Paul* in his function, ought ſo to inherit his virtues, as to give the ſame inſtruction, without confuſion to themſelves, or danger to their people; but except they live with him, they cannot preach with him.

To ſay prayers to the flock every paſtor undertakes, becauſe here an external decency and gravity is generally ſufficient to recommend them to the people; and if they are interiorly indiſpoſed for this duty, it is only known to God, without offence to the hearers; therefore this part of the function all readily perform. Some go farther, and undertake to preach, and inſtruct others to ſalvation, and think they have diſcharged this part very well, if they have delivered ſound doctrine with zeal to the people: But how very few are they, who with a juſt aſſurance can preach this ſermon of the apoſtle, Eſtote mei imitatores: Be followers of me; *without which, all other eloquence, however florid, muſt needs be barren; ſince no words can have that weight with the flock,*

which are not accompanied with good example; neither can God be expected to give a bleſſing to ſuch inſtruction, which is only the eloquence of the tongue, and not of the heart?

But whatever the paſtor be, whether eloquent or ſilent, he is ſtill a preacher; his life ſpeaks aloud to all that know his converſation; Imitatores mei eſtote: Be followers of me. *Whatever his practice be, it is as remarkable as a voice from a pulpit, and is an encouraging leſſon to the flock, of virtue, if good; and of liberty, if that be his practice. He who lives with St* Paul, *daily preaches with St* Paul *the doctrine of the croſs, the love of Chriſt crucified, and renouncing the world: and he who lives to himſelf and the world, daily preaches up ſelf-love and the world; and both one day ſhall accordingly find the juſt recompenſe of their fruitful example, in the number of ſouls that either live or periſh by theſe their powerful inſtructions. A happy day it will be to thoſe, whoſe lives have been a propagation of the Goſpel; but how dreadful to ſuch, who being enemies of the croſs of Chriſt, have encouraged ambition, covetouſneſs, luxury, exceſs; who have invited to the broad way, by a life of idleneſs and eaſe, by gratifying themſelves in all the liberties of ſenſe and ſelf-love, to the evacuating all thoſe maxims of labour, watching, and ſelf-denial, recommended in the Goſ-*

pel, as neceſſary for the ſupport of virtue in this our ſtate of corruption? Theſe will then find, in numbers of loſt ſouls, the powerful preaching of their lives, and that all their liberties have ſpread to generations.

But this exhortation of St *Paul* concerns not only paſtors, but parents too: Theſe are ordained by Almighty God, to give due education to their children, bring them up in the fear of God, and provide them all inſtruction neceſſary for a Chriſtian life; and, beſides this, to give them ſuch good example, that by the parents virtues and diſcipline, the children may inſenſibly be led into the way of God's commandments; and be able to ſay with *David*, *Hæreditate acquiſivi teſtimonia tua, Domine: Thy laws, O Lord, have come to us by inheritance.* And this will certainly be ſo, if they be the Chriſtians they ought to be: for the life of parents to children, is like that of the paſtor to his flock; it is a daily ſermon which ſays to them, *Be followers of me:* For children have it ingrafted in their nature, to approve and follow what they ſee in their parents. Hence we may pronounce thoſe happy, whoſe lives are ſo well ordered, as to be a conſtant exhortation to their children, to piety and the love of God, to moderation, meekneſs, patience, charity, compaſſion, &c.

to a deteſtation of all injuſtice, luxury, and other modiſh vices of the age. Such as theſe anſwer the truſt they have undertaken, and are faithful to their charge: And nothing but this can ſecure them againſt confuſion and deſpair, in whatever miſcarriages afterwards befal their children; for though theſe muſt ever be very ſevere afflictions to parents; yet the conſideration of nothing having been occaſioned through their faults and example, is the only thing that can poſſibly temper and render them any ways tolerable; and it is therefore a point, in which parents, as often as they prepare for the Sacraments, ought ſtrictly to examine themſelves; ſo to lay the foundation of a future peace, and ſecure them hereafter againſt all fears, which otherwiſe may be a rack to their ſouls

For certainly it muſt be ſo to thoſe, who, unmindful of this duty, and carried away with the violence of their own paſſions, give their children daily inſtructions and encouragements to vice, in letting them be witneſſes of their idleneſs, luxury, and intemperance; of their curſing and ſwearing; of their prophane, paſſionate, and uncharitable diſcourſes, and of variety of other diſorders and irregularities, by which they train them up by degrees to wickedneſs,

make their houſes ſo many ſchools of the devil, and ſettle their children in the inheritance of their vices, long before they come to their eſtates. Now, what a part is this for parents to act, who, as they have brought their children forth into this world, are under the ſtricteſt obligation of helping them forwards, as far as in them lies, towards the poſſeſſion of a better; and inſtead of this, to lead them into evil, to encourage them in wickedneſs, to teach them to provoke God betimes, and thus become the unhappy inſtruments of their damnation.—What ſhall I ſay? I think it is the moſt unnatural cruelty in the world, a barbarity ſo inhuman, that to parents, who have but ſouls to think, there cannot poſſibly be any thing more tormenting. To ſee how fond and tender they are of their children, how very ſenſible of every thing that hurts them, and yet at the ſame time to be inſenſibly preparing them for eternal flames, is a Chriſtian abſurdity, ſuch as muſt neceſſarily, upon reflection, put them on the rack, and ſcarce admits of any conſideration to moderate the pain; The children of their bowels, and by their own hands led to the brink of hell! And what a deſpairing guilt muſt it bring on their own heads, if they do not reclaim them? For if ſo ſevere a ſentence be pronounced againſt

thoſe, whoever they be, that ſcandalize any of theſe little ones, *Matt.* xviii. 6. How muſt theſe woes be multiplied on parents, when it is they that give the ſcandal? Let thoſe underſtand the weight of them that can.

I heartily wiſh parents and paſtors would ſeriouſly conſider this point, and be ſo far prevailed on by the greatneſs of their obligation, and theſe diſmal conſequences of their tranſgreſſions, as to be faithful to their truſt, to edify by their good example, all under their care; and not allow, in themſelves or others, any thing that may give ſcandal to their little ones, and draw on them the guilt of parricides, or murderers of ſouls, and even thoſe ſouls, which they undertake to ſave. But this muſt be the effect of thy grace, O God, help therefore, I beſeech thee, all thoſe infinite numbers, who have this great charge upon them; make them ſenſible of their duty; preſerve them from all ſcandals; eſtabliſh them in the practice of virtue and good diſcipline, that they may be as lights ſhining to thoſe that follow; that their lives may be an encouragement to all good; and the virtues of their children and flock may thus come to be the everlaſting increaſe of their crowns.

Twenty-third Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. ix. 18. Ends verſe 26.

A Certain ruler came and adored him, ſaying, Lord, my daughter is now dead. The ſubject of the preſent Goſpel is two miracles, one wrought by Chriſt upon a woman, in the cure of a dangerous diſtemper; the other upon the daughter of this chief of the ſynagogue, who here made his petition to him. In both theſe is figured the unhappy ſtate of ſinners, one of them having been labouring under a tedious diſtemper many years, and the other being quite dead; and though the one being reſtored to health, and the other to life by Chriſt, be demonſtration enough, that there is no kind of ſin, which may not find remedy in him; yet while we ſee the woman here mentioned, had been many years ſeeking cure in following phyſicians, without finding it; and a new life of the other is ſo

far deſpaired of, that the propoſal is receiv-ed with mockery and ſcorn, and no leſs than a miracle from the immediate pre-ſence and omnipotent power of Chriſt, is neceſſary for their help; the comfort here given to ſinners has a very great allay, in the motives given for their concluding, that if their eſtate be of wilful ſin, under the continuance of years, ſuch as renders them quite dead to God, it has ſo much of deſpair in it, that upon following the beſt ſpiritual phyſicians, they may ſeek for health a long time, and not find it at laſt; except Chriſt by his extraordinary and miraculous power, ſhall come in to their aſſiſtance; and if they look on themſelves, have they not more reaſon to deſpair, than hope for this privilege? For what motives can they have to think, that God ſhall ſignalize his favours to them by miracles, who have lived ſo long in rebel-lion againſt him; and had no regard either to his judgments or mercies?

This makes the caſe of habitual ſinners to be almoſt deſperate; but who has brought them into this unhappy ſtate? It is the fruit of their own wickedneſs, and they muſt bear the burthen of it. But, however, they are not to deſpair, ſince miracles may help them; if there be no grounds in themſelves for ſuch undeſerved help, let them build

this hope on the goodneſs and mercies of God, which are infinite, and have here given inſtances of their power. Why were theſe miracles wrought, but to prove the miſſion of Chriſt, and to encourage diſtreſſed ſouls to ſeek for comfort and cure in him? But then, ought not thoſe, who deſire this relief, to put themſelves in the diſpoſitions of theſe, who here met with ſuch ſucceſs? For if they do not labour in this, their hope will be rather a temptation than virtue, and haſten death inſtead of preparing for a cure.

Hence I can have but little confidence in their method, who, ſenſible of the great diſorder of their ſouls, and of the dangerous infirmities under which they labour, upon a preſent deſire of amendment, make a haſty preparation for the acknowledgment of their ſins, and then running to the table of our Lord, conclude their peace to be made, and that now they are in the ſtate of health, and innocence. For though theſe ſacred ordinances are, by a divine virtue, powerful reſtoratives of health, yet like the beſt medicines, they cannot be expected to do good, but where the patients, by ſuitable preparations, fit themſelves for receiving the benefit of them. If therefore theſe ſinners, touched with a ſenſe of their

iniquities, and with the desire of a better state, would, by penitential exercises, first truly humble themselves in their own eyes, so as to judge themselves unworthy of appearing in the presence of God; if instead of thrusting in amongst those guests, whose better life fits them for the holy banquet, they would judge an exclusion from that privilege more becoming their condition, and be contented to be in their father's house, not as children, but as servants; if they would thus not only humble themselves, with this distressed woman, but likewise raise their hearts by a lively faith and confidence in God; if they would lay open their necessities with the holy importunity of this ruler, approach to Christ with his adoration and hope; from such preparations might be expected all the help they desire and want; for it is only on these conditions, sinners are encouraged to hope for mercy, and by these ways the Gospel teaches them to seek it. But if they step over them, contenting themselves with that, which, without these, is only the form of repentance, they may easily have the form of absolution without the effect; and return from the tribunal of mercy with all the guilt they brought with them; besides the addition of sacrilege and prophanation to their former sins.

And becauſe few of thoſe ſinners, here concerned, make due reflection upon this preparation, and fewer take pains in accompliſhing it; hence, I cannot but fear, that while great numbers crowd, with the multitude, about Chriſt, they are not many, who, like the infirm woman, touch him, ſo as to find the effect of his preſence. This muſt be the effect of a particular grace; and, O God, how few are they, who, by the exerciſes of true humility and penance, put themſelves in the diſpoſition of obtaining this favour from thy hands!

Wherefore it muſt certainly be concluded the great concern of all Chriſtians to prevent their coming into this unhappy ſtate, which has ſo much danger in it, and ſo many difficulties in being delivered from it. What therefore are they to do, but obſerve the ſame method, as to their ſpiritual, which diſcretion teaches them as to their corporal health? Thoſe, who are ſolicitous to eſcape habitual diſtempers, obſerve order in all the concerns of life, both as to eating, drinking, ſleeping, buſineſſes, and divertiſements, avoid all extremities of heats and colds; and upon any ſymptoms of a diſorder appearing, endeavour, by ſeaſonable care, to prevent its coming to a head. In

the ſame manner are Chriſtians to proceed: They are to be ſtrict in obſerving order and diſcipline in all they do, as to the affairs both of body and ſoul; they are to admit nothing that is immoderate; and upon diſcovering an eagerneſs in any one paſſion, which is the ſymptom of an approaching diſeaſe, are forthwith to ſet a watch upon it, and by timely endeavours ſtrive to bring it into due ſubjection.

By this way, though it will not cut off all failings, and ſins of ſurpriſe or paſſion, yet there will no opportunity be given for any of them to become immoderate, or grow into a cuſtom; and ſo the moſt dangerous diſtempers will be prevented. But here is the misfortune; too many are poſſeſſed with a principle, that little diſorders can do but little harm; and hence they ſay, what need of being exact to hours of prayer, of eating or ſleeping? What harm can there be in neglecting ſuch order? What if we love company, gaming, take ſome liberties in drinking, converſation, *&c.* It is in ſuch a moderate way, that nothing but a ſcrupulous nicety can cenſure it. I would ſay the ſame with them, did I not ſee theſe little diſorders bring on inſenſibly the worſt diſtempers; and that by ſuch inconſiderable things neglected, there is made, by degrees, a ſa-

miliarity with the blackeſt crimes. It may ſeem little to neglect order in the diſcipline of life; but let them ſhew me, where this is the practice of any time, without being followed with notorious irregularities. It may ſeem inconſiderable, not to be exact in the time of riſing in the morning, in praying, and reading, or ſpeaking the rigorous truth; but let them tell me, where ſuch liberties are uſually taken, where they are not followed with greater? And whether it be not from ſuch ſeeds, that the devil makes his harveſt in the fruit of all iniquity?

If this then be the uſual progreſs of ſin, as moſt certainly it is, what can be more adviſable for Chriſtians, than to be watchful in theſe points (which are eſteemed but inconſiderable) as the moſt effectual means for avoiding the dangerous ſtate of an habitual indiſpoſition of ſoul, from which ſo very few recover; Grant, O God, to all that profeſs thy name, this wiſdom, by which they may be delivered from the ſnares of a powerful and ſubtle enemy, who, by covered ways, and undiſcerned contrivances, obtains the poſſeſſion of infinite ſouls. Make me always watchful againſt him, and never to walk on confident of being ſecure, where ſo many like myſelf, have begun and gone on blindly into the depth of vice.

And

And as for all thoſe, who are now in this unhappy ſtate, give them a ſenſe of their miſery and grace, whereby they may be reſcued from it, that not contenting themſelves with the ceremonies of a ſuperficial repentance, they may lay the ax to the root, and, as thou commandeſt, ſeek thy mercy, by bringing forth worthy fruits of penance.

When there are five and twenty Sundays after Pentecoſt, *read on the four and twentieth Sunday the inſtructions of the ſixth Sunday after* Epiphany.

When ſix and twenty Sundays, read on the four and twentieth, the inſtructions of the fifth, and on the five and twentieth, thoſe of the ſixth Sunday after Epiphany.

When ſeven and twenty Sundays, read on the twenty-fourth, the inſtructions of the fourth, on the twenty-fifth, thoſe of the fifth, and on the twenty-ſixth, thoſe of the Sixth Sunday after Epiphany.

When eight and twenty Sundays, read on the twenty-fourth, the inſtructions of the,

third, on the twenty-fifth those of the fourth, on the twenty-sixth those of the fifth, on the twenty-seventh those of the sixth Sunday after Epiphany, *and on the twenty eighth, those of the twenty-fourth Sunday after* Pentecost, *which must always be read the last, and on the Sunday immediately going before* Advent.

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

EPISTLE.

Coloſſ. 1. 9. Ends verſe 14.

WE *pray without ceaſing* —— *that you may walk worthy of God, pleaſing him in all things*, and *bringing forth fruit in every good work.* The obligation we are under of pleaſing God, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, may be eaſily apprehended by the great ſolicitude of St *Paul*, in praying without ceaſing, that his flock might ſtrictly follow this rule, and be ever found thus doing. The ground of this our common duty is evident; firſt, on the part of God; becauſe he being our Sovereign Lord, our Creator, Redeemer, Preſerver, Father, the Beginning and End of all things; juſtice obliges us, who are his creatures, the price of his blood, his ſervants, his children, and wholly depending on his will, ever to walk worthy of him, and pleaſe him in all things, in every

good work. Secondly, from the conſideration of ourſelves, and the circumſtances of our ſtate: For ſince we believe a life eternal to come; and that the obtaining poſſeſſion of it depends on the good management of this preſent life, in diſcharging all thoſe duties Almighty God exacts from us; it is a juſtice we owe ourſelves, to be careful in pleaſing God, and bringing forth fruit in every good work, that ſo we may not be excluded that everlaſting inheritance, the divine mercy has prepared for us. Upon theſe heads, we are obliged to be bringing forth fruit; and hence appeats the neceſſity of a chriſtian life being a fruitful life; that is, of the Chriſtian being ſo employed, that what he does, may be pleaſing to God, and conſequently, beneficial in order to eternal happineſs; becauſe this is to be the fruit of his living here; and this is the trueſt meaſure of a chriſtian life: And therefore St *Bernard* ſays, *Whatever a man does, that is not for this nd of pleaſing God, it is being idle and doing nothing; it is living without fruit, and loſing that time which is given us.*

Hence, firſt, whatever time is ſpent in doing what is contrary to the commands of God or his church, in detraction, evil converſation, exceſſes, revenge, injuſtice, *&c.*

is doing worſe than nothing, is time quite loſt. Secondly, An idle life, whether exterior or interior, as of thoſe who apply their thoughts to nothing; or, at leaſt, unprofitably, in vain projects, chimerical deſigns, are at reſt with their arms acroſs, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Thirdly, all indifferent actions, as eating, drinking, ſleeping, viſiting, recreating, *&c.* if done only to pleaſe ourſelves, or on human conſiderations, without any way referring them to God, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Fourthly, Doing what is otherwiſe good, if it be not what God requires of us, as for a magiſtrate to be viſiting the ſick, when he ſhould be adminiſtring juſtice to the oppreſſed; a paſtor to be ſtudying when the neceſſities of his flock call for help; a ſhopkeeper, or ſervant, to be all day in the church, when the obligation to his family or maſter requires his being at home; with all of this kind, is doing nothing, and time loſt. Laſtly, Doing the beſt of actions, without regard to God and our ſalvation, is doing nothing, and time loſt: Becauſe all this is either contrary to the will of God, or elſe not done as he requires it; and conſequently, it is not walking worthy of God, it is not pleaſing to him; and therefore not poſſible to bring forth fruit. And what a

misfortune muſt it be to Chriſtians, thus to loſe this time, who have only this time granted them for working out their ſalvation, which being once wholly loſt, muſt, with everlaſting deſpair, be lamented, but never can be redeemed!

And now ſince this is the condition of our being here, that we muſt either bring forth the fruit required, or elſe never be happy, I know nothing ſo much to be dreaded by Chriſtians, and with greater care to be avoided, than an idle and unactive life, which, though not criminal in terms, is yet ſuch, as in itſelf, or its conſequences, at leaſt, renders ſalvation difficult, if not wholly inconſiſtent with it; for if bringing forth be neceſſary, it is not only the land that is overgrown with thorns, that is accurſed; but even that which lies unprofitable and barren without thorns or fruit: Therefore was a curſe pronounced againſt the tree in the Goſpel found without fruit; and the ſervant, who had not miſ-ſpent his talent, but only laid it by without improvement, was rejected, not for a wicked, but an unprofitable ſervant. The Chriſtian's duty is not only to avoid evil, but to do good; it is to bring forth fruit; if he does not this, he needs not aſk, what commandment he breaks? For though he be no thief, nor

murderer, nor adulterer, yet he is an *unprofitable ſervant*; and their portion is much the ſame.

Muſt it not therefore be a great unhappineſs in thoſe, who ought ever to be well employed, not to know how to employ themſelves at all? Truly I cannot but pity that great number of both ſexes, who have inclinations to do well, but are every day at a loſs, and know not what to do: Their time, which ought to be ſo precious, ſticks on their hands, and all their conſideration is, how they are to ſpend it idly: It is their great misfortune, and ſo, I fear, they will find it; but it is a much greater in their parents, who have given them ſuch a wretched and unchriſtian education, as to make them in love with nothing, that ought to be their fit employment of vacant hours: There are great variety of theſe; whether in ſtudying, reading, working, which are honourable enough and ſuitable to all degrees; and though, not neceſſary for a livelihood, becauſe they are otherwiſe bleſſed with plenty, yet neceſſary ſtill to make them live like Chriſtians; and ſuch, to which the parent's care ought inſenſibly to incline them in their tender years. But theſe, too often indiſcreetly fond, ſtudy more to court and pleaſe their children,

than to breed them up like Chriſtians. The children's inclination govern their parents more than their own reaſon, religion, or duty; hence their chief care is how to ſatisfy them; by this means to ſecure to themſelves their love: For this reaſon, they encourage them in all that is modiſh, vain, and curious; and by this yielding method, daily ſtrengthen in them thoſe natural infirmities and corruptions, which they bring into the world; and for fear of making them uneaſy, dare not reſtrain their inclinations, nor apply them to ſuch things, which afterwards may be an advantage in the well-ſpending their time. Thus principled they grow up, and though their own reaſon then weakly informs them they ought to be well employed, yet finding nothing they can then turn to with any delight, they are put to conſider how to divert themſelves: And hence each ſex unhappily takes its courſe wholly to diverſion and idleneſs; and thus their life is ſpent in unprofitable viſits, in the theatre, the park, the muſic houſe, in entertainments, in taverns, gaming, balls, *&c.* And how many, beginning in theſe ſchools, go on ſo far, till they have an averſion to every thing that is orderly and good, and, by degrees, arrive to profeſſed impiety, intemperance, and vice;

waſting their eſtates and health, and abandoning religion, and all the concern of a future ſtate? Truly, of ſo many ſouls that periſh, of ſo many families that are brought to ruin, of ſo many that take extravagant and unchriſtian ways, I cannot but apprehend, the greater number owe their misfortunes to this unhappy root of idleneſs, and the miſchievous neglect of parents, in not teaching their children to love ſome better employment of their time, and expoſing them to that deſperate temptation all their lives, of not knowing what to do. Deſperate, I ſay, for though perſeverance in the continued labours of a virtuous life be to all difficult, and has variety of dangers to overcome; yet to ſuch as are at a loſs in knowing not how to employ their time, theſe difficulties and dangers are multiplied to ſo great an exceſs, that it muſt be no leſs than a miracle to preſerve ſuch in any tolerable degree of Chriſtianity, and ſecure them from the depth of vice, and this is the bleſſing fond parents too often leave their children, flattering them in petty things, and making them for ever miſerable; ſo that in the end it will appear, they had better have bred them to the labours of the plough, than brought them up to this ſtate of idleneſs; whilſt their ſalvation depending

on their walking worthy of God, pleasing him in all things, and bringing forth fruit in every good work; they are by these means taught to walk worthy of a wicked world, and unworthy of God; to please their own corrupt passions, and displease him, and bring forth no other fruit but of vice and damnation. And yet, O God, how common is this practice in the world! It is thy powerful grace alone can remedy it, in making parents wiser, and children more careful of their time, and laborious in every duty. Remedy it therefore, I beseech thee,

Twenty-fourth Sunday after Pentecoſt.

GOSPEL.

Matt. xxiv. 15. Ends verſe 35.

WHEN *you ſhall ſee the abomination of deſolation ſtanding in the holy place——then let thoſe who are in* Judea *fly to the mountains.* The advice given by Chriſt in this Goſpel is principally in regard either of the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* by *Titus*, or of the laſt perſecution of the church by Antichriſt. The miſeries of beſieged *Jeruſalem* make no impreſſion now, becauſe they are paſt; and the deſolation of the church by Antichriſt gives not any alarm, becauſe it ſeems ſo far off: But why are we not moved with the preſent ſigns of God's anger, which ſeems provoked againſt us? The marks given to the faithful by Chriſt, as pointing out the time when the divine wrath ſhould diſcharge itſelf upon *Jeruſalem*, was when they ſhould ſee *abomination ſtanding in the holy place.* The prophanation of holy things is both a mark and effect of God's anger; and if the believers

were then directed to retire out of *Jeruſalem*, and ſeek ſhelter in the mountains, when they ſhould obſerve this mark, that ſo they might not be made a part of the common ruin; have not Chriſtians ſufficient reaſon to conſider, whether they do not obſerve at preſent ſigns of the divine wrath, enough to oblige them to fear God's judgments, and to think of providing for their own ſecurity?

Let them but take a paſſing review of the prophanation of all holy things; of the very altar, by the unexemplary and ſcandalous lives of the eccleſiaſtics; of the temple, by the great irreverence of the faithful; of the ſacraments, by thoſe who unworthily approach to them; of the word of God, by ſuch as pervert it for the ſupport of their errors; of God's moſt holy name, by thoſe who unworthily prophane it; of religion and piety, by ſuch as carry on the moſt unwarrantable undertakings under this cover, and by the ſame, draw in the credulous to their party; of God's will, by ſinners who contemn it; of his law, by the ſame, who trample it under their feet; of his juſtice, by thoſe who deſpiſe it; of his mercy, by ſuch as in confidence of this continue raſhly in their wickedneſs.

Such a conſideration, attended with all its

circumſtances, beſides infinite other branches, may be enough to conclude, that there is truly now abomination of deſolation ſtanding in the holy place, and that upon this ſign of God's diſpleaſure there is reaſon to ſeek ſecurity againſt his judgments, nay, (without looking farther at preſent) againſt theſe judgments; his ſevereſt ſcourges being not greater judgments than this ſo general corruption; it being part of that chaſtiſement with which St. *Paul* ſays, *Rom.* chap. i. God puniſhed thoſe unbelievers, who knowing God, did not glorify him as God, and therefore were abandoned by him, and delivered up to a reprobate ſenſe, even to their own infamous paſſions, and to the deſires of their own hearts. This rigorous puniſhment now upon ſuch infinite numbers, who knowing God, do not glorify him as God, but prophane him in all that is holy, and therefore are delivered up to the corruption of their own reprobate ſenſe, is that which ought to awaken all obſervers, and oblige them to have recourſe to Chriſt, who is the mountain, and in whom alone is their ſecurity.

And principally to turn away the anger of God, and weight of his judgments from the chriſtian world, by humbling themſelves before him, and endeavouring to move him

to mercy. And yet not ſo, as juſtifying and diſtinguiſhing themſelves from others as having no part in their crimes, by which God's juſtice has been provoked: For who knows but they have contributed to it by their tepidity and neglect; by their pride, ingratitude, and the abuſe of ſuch graces as they have received? Who knows but the opinion of their own virtue is raiſed from the greater ſins of others, in which they do not concur; and that they may connive at many ſins in themſelves, becauſe they ſeem leſs than what others commit? And may not they hence inſenſibly loſe the horror of great offences, accuſtom themſelves to them, not think of bewailing, and much leſs of oppoſing them? Thus then many, who reflect not upon it, may have a great part in the provocations given to God, and in drawing down his judgments.

And therefore the better part, even of the beſt, is to join themſelves with ſinners, humbling themſelves with them, and not confiding in any thing of their own, to build their hopes on the greatneſs of God's mercy alone; as we ſee practiſed by *Daniel*, who having without queſtion the leaſt ſhare in thoſe ſins which had provoked God to tranſport the *Jews* into *Babylon*, yet ſeparates not himſelf from others, but joining

with them, puts himſelf into the number of thoſe who had provoked God to wrath, *We have ſinned*, ſays he, *we have committed iniquity, we have departed from thy commandments, we deſerve confuſion for our ſins. It is not in confidence of our own juſtice we offer our prayers to thee, but of the multitude of thy mercies.* And ſince this humility of the prophet was ſo acceptable to God, as to obtain from him a revelation of the *Meſſias*, and a promiſe of liberty for his people, I think Chriſtians cannot have better encouragement and direction as to the general method they are to take in their addreſſes to God for removing his judgments from his people.

But as to themſelves, Chriſt gives this advice: *He that is on the houſe-top, let him not go down to take any thing; and he that is in the field, let him not return to take his coat.* In which words, he gives direction to thoſe who have gained any degree of virtue, not to be prevailed on by the conſideration of worldly intereſt or affection to go back again into the common ways of the world, but rather to abandon all that belongs to earth, for their greater ſecurity againſt the wrath of God. They who are ſolicitous to ſave all, hazard all; it is therefore more adviſable for them to let that periſh which

is perishable, and to confine their solicitude to the saving that which is eternal. Whence all those must conclude themselves under a fatal mistake, who think their salvation must cost them nothing; and for putting themselves under covert against the common corruptions of the world, will not renounce any part of their convenience or interest: For these, who are so earnest in linking their temporal affairs to salvation, are easily surprised with ruin, as the *Jews* were, who, unwilling to quit their conveniences by leaving the city, lost themselves by endeavouring to save what belonged to them.

Hence it is, Christ pronounces woes against those who, in such circumstances, are with child, or give suck; that is, against such as are big with worldly desires and projects, and such as make their body the sole object of their care; flattering it as a nurse does her infant, in all the ways that can be pleasing to it; because those are so bent on this world, and the promising satisfactions of it, that they cannot be persuaded a retreat is necessary; and therefore go on under all the delusions of self-love and the world, till the terror of God's judgments, and death, meets them; when an eternal separation must be their punishment, for ad-

mitting of no ſeparation before for turning away the anger of God from them, and making proviſion for eternity.

There being this difficulty, all have reaſon to pray, as here adviſed, *That their flight be not in winter, or on the ſabbath*; that is, that God will not permit his judgments, or extraordinary trials, to fall upon them at a time when their ſouls are weak, barren, tepid, and dry; when through theſe indiſpoſitions they ſhall not be prepared to fly to the mountains, and ſeek ſhelter in God; but that he would be ſo merciful, as to proportion his grace to the temptations that ſhall befal them: For an ordinary degree of virtue being not ſufficient to ſtand under extraordinary trials, if he does not thus mercifully aſſiſt them, they muſt be ſurpriſed by ruin. What will an ordinary humility do under extraordinary humiliations; or a moderate degree of ſelf-denial, when the greateſt intereſts are to be renounced? And ſince none know the trials they have yet to go through, whether in life or as to the manner of dying, have not all reaſon to make this a part of their daily prayer, that God would prepare them for all tribulations, and mercifully ſtand by them in the day of diſtreſs?

O God, we are ſenſible of thy judg-

ments; paſt ages inſtruct us, preſent chaſtiſements awaken us, and we have the terror of what is yet to come. We confeſs our ſins bear a great part in the provocation given to thy juſtice, and at the ſame time acknowledge thy mercy in ſhewing us how to eſcape thy wrath. Perfect this mercy, we beſeech thee, in us, that at preſent, by a true humility, we may move thee to moderate thy ſcourges, and by a ſincere converſion to thee, may receive thoſe graces which may carry us through all trials that are yet to come, and direct us ever to thee, by whom alone we can ſubſiſt.

In this are finiſhed the inſtructions of the year; the deſign of them being my neighbour's good, I have not only propoſed my own thoughts, but likewiſe borrowed from others, ſuch as I judged proper to anſwer this end; ſo that in many places there is more of tranſlation than compoſition in them. This will be no more offenſive to my neighbour, than it is in his ſickneſs to be cured by ſuch medicines which are not made up by him who preſcribes them; and it is as little injurious to me, who, propoſing no more than his good, am as well ſatisfied in effecting it by helps from another's ſtock as from my own. I pray God give it this effect, and in my neighbour's good I have my end.

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